

ROBERT BROWNING'S WORKS

CENTENARY EDITION

IN TEN VOLUMES

VOLUME III



Emery Walker Ph. sc

Robert Browning
(aged 48)

*from an oil painting by Gordigiani, 1860
in the possession of R. Barrett Browning Esq.*

THE WORKS OF ROBERT BROWNING

WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY
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VOLUME III—LURIA—
A SOUL'S TRAGEDY—
DRAMATIC LYRICS—
DRAMATIC ROMANCES



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INTRODUCTION

LURIA

THE eighth and last part of *Bells and Pomegranates* contained the two plays, *Luria* and *A Soul's Tragedy*. *Luria* was in an early stage of composition in February, 1845, when it is mentioned in one of the first of the poet's letters to Miss Barrett (*Letters of R. Browning and E. B. Barrett*, i. 18); and in the subsequent correspondence references to it are frequent. It was finished in February, 1846, and published in the following April (*ib.*, i. 462, ii. 66). It was not written for the stage, the avenues to which had been closed to Browning by his differences with Macready and Kean, and it has never been acted. The length of the speeches and the paucity of action make it, in fact, unsuitable to the stage; but in respect of poetry most readers would give it the first place among Browning's dramas. On its publication it was well reviewed by Forster in the *Examiner*, and cordially received by the poet's friends (notably, of course, by Miss Barrett, who refused the dedication of it, and by Landor, who accepted it); but it cannot be said to have made a great impression on the general public, who by

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this time had made up their minds that Browning was not a poet for them.

The setting of the play is provided by the internecine quarrels between Florence and Pisa at the beginning of the fifteenth century; but the characters and incidents have no historical foundation.

A SOUL'S TRAGEDY

A Soul's Tragedy followed *Luria* in Part VIII of *Bells and Pomegranates*, and brought the series to its conclusion; but it had preceded it in order of composition. In February, 1845, when *Luria* was still unwritten, Browning refers to *A Soul's Tragedy* as done (*Letters of R. Browning and E. B. Barrett*, i. 26); and it is probably the "wise metaphysical play, about a great mind and soul turning to ill," which he speaks of his intention to finish, in a letter written to Alfred Domett on May 22, 1842 (*R. Browning and A. Domett*, p. 36; see also *Letters of R. B. and E. B. B.*, i. 474). But, for some reason or another, the poet was dissatisfied with it. He describes it to Miss Barrett as "all sneering and disillusion," and is prepared to burn it if she says the word (*op. cit.*, i. 470, 474). Fortunately Miss Barrett, whose critical taste was singularly fine and discriminating, recognized the remarkable merit of the piece as soon as she saw it, and fairly scolded

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the author for his depreciation of it (*ib.*, i. 545, ii. 13). And though it appears to have passed comparatively unnoticed at the time of its publication, subsequent critics and readers have recognized it as perhaps intellectually the most brilliant work of its author up to this date. With *Luria* and *A Soul's Tragedy* the series of Browning's plays comes to an end (unless the dramatic sketch, *In a Balcony*, be taken into account); and although neither of them was intended for the stage, they stand (with *Pippa Passes*) at the head of his productions in dramatic form, the one for its poetry, the other for its wit and skill in characterization.

The impulse which had driven Browning into dramatic composition, and which had received expression mainly in the series of *Bells and Pomegranates* from 1841 to 1846, was now exhausted. In a remarkable letter written to Domett on July 13, 1846, he gives vivid expression to the feeling that he had reached a breathing point in his poetic development,—had worked off a number of conceptions by which his mind had been beset, had learnt much in the workmanship of his craft, and was now ready, after a reasonable rest, to start with more assured hope and determination on whatever "real work" should present itself to be done. Moreover a fresh interest and a fresh inspiration had now entered into his life. In January, 1845, his acquaintance with Miss Barrett had begun. In September, 1846, five months after the publication of *Luria* and *A Soul's Tragedy*, he was married to her, and left England

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for that fifteen years' residence in Italy which was to be the crown of his life, both as poet and as man.

DRAMATIC LYRICS

The sequence of dramas in the series of *Bells and Pomegranates* was twice broken by the issue of a part containing shorter poems. The first of these, the third volume in the series, was entitled *Dramatic Lyrics*, and appeared in October, 1842, as the result of representations by the publisher, Moxon, that such a variety would be useful for popularity's sake. The second, *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*, was No. VII in the series, and was published in November, 1845. But these *Dramatic Lyrics* and *Dramatic Romances* were very different from the collections of poems grouped under these headings in the *Poetical Works*, from 1863 onwards. In the two-volume edition of *Poems* published in 1849 the two groups of poems were printed together (with the solitary omission of *Claret and Tokay*) under the common title of *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*; but the original order was maintained, though the titles and text of the poems were for the most part changed into the forms now familiar. In the three-volume edition of *Poetical Works*, however, published in 1863 (the fifty poems entitled *Men and Women* having appeared in the meanwhile), Browning regrouped all his shorter poems published up to that date ;

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and the arrangement then made it seems right to observe, both because the generation that learnt to know Browning's merits is familiar with it, and because it is that deliberately adopted by the poet himself.

There is, however, this disadvantage, that the new classification obscures the chronological development of the poet's genius by intermingling poems written over a period of some twenty years. The original *Dramatic Lyrics* of 1842 contained only the following sixteen poems :

Cavalier Tunes :

- (i.) Marching along.
- (ii.) Give a Rouse.
- (iii.) My Wife Gertrude.

Italy and France :

- (i.) Italy [= My Last Duchess].
- (ii.) France [= Count Gismond].

Camp and Cloister :

- (i.) Camp (French) [= Incident of the French Camp].
- (ii.) Cloister (Spanish) [= Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister].

In a Gondola.

Artemis Prologuizes.

Waring.

Queen Worship.

- (i.) Rudel and the Lady of Tripoli.
- (ii.) Cristina.

Madhouse Cells :

- (i.) [= Johannes Agricola].
- (ii.) [= Porphyria's Lover].

Through the Metidja to Abd-el-Kadr, 1842.

The Pied Piper of Hamelin ; a Child's Story.

Of these sixteen, only six (the three *Cavalier Tunes*, *Through the Metidja*, the *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister*, and *Cristina*) appear in the

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Dramatic Lyrics of the subsequent arrangement. Seven (*My Last Duchess*, *Count Gismond*, *Incident of the French Camp*, *In a Gondola*, *Waring*, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, and *Porphyria's Lover*) appear in *Dramatic Romances*; while the remaining three (*Artemis Prologuizes*, *Rudel*, and *Johannes Agricola*) were included in *Men and Women*. Consequently the reader who wishes to follow Browning's poetical development chronologically must pick out these poems from the sections in which the poet placed them in 1863, and in which they are here printed.

Of the fifty poems composing the existing *Dramatic Lyrics*, six belong to the original *Dramatic Lyrics* (Part III of *Bells and Pomegranates*), fourteen to the original *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (Part VII), and thirty to the much later *Men and Women*. Chronological order is so far observed that the poems belonging to *Bells and Pomegranates* are all (with the exception of *Home Thoughts* and the first part of *Saul*) grouped together at the beginning. The reader may therefore remember that between the song, "Nay, but you who do not love her," and *A Woman's Last Word* intervenes the epoch-making event of Browning's marriage, and his consequent departure to Italy. Thirty of the thirty-two poems which follow (including the extended *Saul*, and reckoning *Before* and *After* as two poems) belong to the supreme flowering time of Browning's life, the fifteen years of his

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married life in Italy. In the *Men and Women* of 1855 and the *Dramatis Personæ* of 1864 most critics will agree to find the finest expression of his genius, least clouded by his characteristic defects.

CAVALIER TUNES

First printed in *Bells and Pomegranates*, Part III. Probably a by-product of the period when Browning was assisting Forster with his *Life of Strafford* and writing his own play on the same subject.

THE LOST LEADER

First printed in *Bells and Pomegranates*, Part VII. The basis of the poem was avowedly the defection of Wordsworth from the party of progress and freedom, which hailed with delight the opening stages of the French Revolution, to the party of resistance to change and maintenance of the ancient ways. Wordsworth's change of attitude was wholly due to the excesses of the Revolution and its development into an aggressive menace of the freedom of other nations, and Browning never pretended that the opening lines of the poem really applied to his case. In later years he was repeatedly questioned on the subject, and at least two letters from him in answer are extant. In one, written to Mr. A. B. Grosart on Feb. 24, 1875 (T. J. Wise, *Letters of Robert Browning*, i. 28), he confesses: "I did in my hasty youth presume to use the great and vener-

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able personality of Wordsworth as a sort of painter's model; one from which this or the other particular feature may be selected and turned to account: had I intended more, above all, such a boldness as portraying the entire man, I should not have talked about 'handfuls of silver' and 'bits of ribbon.' These never influenced the change of politics of the great poet; whose defection, nevertheless, accompanied as it was by a regular face-about of his special party, was to my juvenile apprehension, and even mature consideration, an event to deplore. . . . Though I dare not deny the original of my little poem, I altogether refuse to have it considered as the very [*sic*: query "vera"?] effigies of such a moral and intellectual superiority." In another, written to a Miss Lee in September of the same year (Mrs. Orr's *Life*, 1908, p. 123), he says: "I undoubtedly had Wordsworth in my mind, but simply as a 'model.' . . . I thought of the great poet's abandonment of liberalism, at an unlucky juncture, and no repaying consequence that I could ever see. But once call my fancy portrait *Wordsworth*—and how much more ought one to say,—how much more would not I have attempted to say!"

"HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX"

First printed in *Bells and Pomegranates*, Part VII (1845). "I wrote it," said Browning, "under the bulwark of a vessel off the African coast,

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after I had been at sea long enough to appreciate even the fancy of a gallop on the back of a certain good horse 'York,' then in my stable at home. It was written in pencil on the fly-leaf of Bartoli's *Simboli*, I remember"; and Mrs. Orr adds that the pencil dints are still visible in it (*Life*, 1908, p. 94). It has generally been assumed that the occasion thus described was during Browning's first voyage to Italy, in May, 1838; but the date of publication, coupled with its non-inclusion in the *Dramatic Lyrics* of 1842, suggests that it should rather be assigned to the second voyage, in the autumn of 1844. See also the introductory note to *Home Thoughts, from the Sea*, below.

There is no historical foundation to the story. Writing to Mr. C. D. Browning in 1883 (Wise, *Letters of Robert Browning*, 2nd series, ii. 79), the poet says explicitly "there is no historical incident whatever commemorated by the poem you mention,—which I wrote at sea, off the African coast, with a merely general impression of the characteristic warfare and besieging which abound in the annals of Flanders. This accounts for some difficulties in the time and space occupied by the ride in one night." The ride (though not precisely of one night, since it was "morning as plain as could be" by the time a third of the journey had been accomplished) is indeed excessive, the distance from Ghent to Aix by the route described being at least 120 miles; but the hard fact does not detract from the merit of the poem.

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THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-KADR

In Part III of *Bells and Pomegranates*, where this poem was first printed, the date 1842 is attached to the title, and it is therefore to be assumed that this was its date of production. Abd-el-Kadr, the leader of the national resistance to the French conquest of Algeria from 1832 to 1837, and again from 1839 to 1847, when he finally surrendered and was deported to France, was a hero of popular fancy; but the poem is little more than a metrical study representing the rhythm of a horse's canter.

NATIONALITY IN DRINKS

The first two of these poems were printed in *Hood's Magazine* in June 1844, and were reprinted in Part VII of *Bells and Pomegranates* under the title of *Claret and Tokay*. The third appeared in the same part, as the second section of *Home Thoughts, from Abroad*. This, if its second line is to be trusted, must have been written in the autumn of 1844, when the poet made his second voyage to Italy. The contributions to *Hood's Magazine* were made in order to assist Tom Hood, then a dying man; they included *The Laboratory*, *Claret and Tokay*, *Garden Fancies*, *The Boy and the Angel*, *The Tomb at St. Praxed's*, and part of *The Flight of the Duchess*. Five earlier poems had been contributed to the *Monthly Repository* in 1834—

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1836 ; two were sent to the *Keepsake* of 1856 and 1857, and two to the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1864 ; but otherwise Browning made a strict rule (carried to the extent of refusing an offer of £400 from an American editor and returning a blank cheque to an English one (never to contribute to periodicals—a rule to which one notable exception was made for a good reason in the case of *Heuvé Riel*).

GARDEN FANCIES

First printed in *Hood's Magazine*, July 1844, under the circumstances described in the introduction to *Nationality in Drinks*, and reprinted in Part VII of *Bells and Pomegranates*.

SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER

First printed in Part III of *Bells and Pomegranates*, as the second section of "Camp and Cloister," under the title *Cloister (Spanish)*.

THE LABORATORY : THE CONFESSIONAL

The Laboratory was first printed in *Hood's Magazine* for June, 1844, and reprinted in Part VII of *Bells and Pomegranates*, where *The Confessional* was attached to it as a pendant, the pair being grouped under the title *France and Spain*. Mr. Hall Griffin (*Life*, p. 133) observes that *The Laboratory* is the subject of D. G. Rossetti's first water-colour.

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CRISTINA

First printed in *Bells and Pomegranates*, Part III, as the second section of "Queen Worship," the first section being the poem *Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli*, transferred in 1863 to the section of *Men and Women*. The common title gives the clue to the special meaning of the poem, the supposed subject of which is the beautiful Queen Cristina of Spain, fourth wife of Ferdinand VII, and Queen Regent after his death in 1833 until her abdication in 1840. To her influence was due the disputed Spanish succession connected with the name of Don Carlos. Having been driven to abdication by the revelation of her secret marriage to an officer in the army, she continued to take a prominent part in politics for several years afterwards; but it is probable that Browning's poem (which does not claim to have any close relation to facts) was written while she was still queen.

A number of small alterations were made in the poem when it was reprinted in the collected edition of 1849. In its original form the rhythm varied somewhat aimlessly; in technical terms, trochaic and iambic rhythms were intermingled without apparent reason. In the edition of 1849 the necessary verbal changes were made to bring it into its present uniformly trochaic metre, greatly to its benefit.

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THE LOST MISTRESS : EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES

First printed in *Bells and Pomegranates*, Part VII.

MEETING AT NIGHT : PARTING AT MORNING

First printed in *Bells and Pomegranates*, Part VII, under the title *Night and Morning*.

SONG

First printed in *Bells and Pomegranates*, Part VII.

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD

With this begins the series of poems which made their first appearance in the two volumes of *Men and Women*, published in 1855. All the remaining poems now included under the heading of *Dramatic Lyrics* belong to this series, with the exception of the two *Home Thoughts*, and part of *Saul*. Most, if not all, of them were written after Browning's marriage, when Italy was his home.

EVELYN HOPE

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. It has always been one of the most popular poems of Browning, and when the *Pall Mall Gazette*, shortly after Browning's death, instituted a plebiscite among its readers for the fifty poems

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best suited to form a volume of selections, *Evelyn Hope* was second in the list, being only surpassed in popular favour by *How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*.

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. The Italian scenery appears definitely here, but the poem is said to have been written in Paris on January 1, 1852 (Hall Griffin and Minchin, *Life*, p. 189). The Brownings had left Italy in the previous June for the first time since their arrival in 1846, had spent two months in England, and now were settled in the Champs Elysées, where they remained for about nine months. The poem is noteworthy, not only for the beauty of its word-pictures and the warmth and sincerity of its emotion, but also as one of the most striking and successful of Browning's metrical experiments.

A LOVERS' QUARREL

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. The marriage of the Emperor Napoleon III, which is referred to in stanza v, took place on Jan. 30, 1853, by which time the Brownings had returned to their home ("Casa Guidi") in Florence. It was during the same winter that the phenomena of spiritualism, to which reference is made in stanza vii, began to attract attention; and it is probable that this poem was written then or shortly afterwards.

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UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. Obviously a work—and a very delightful and characteristic work—of the Italian period, but there is no evidence to fix its date.

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. Baldassare Galuppi was a Venetian composer of the eighteenth century (1706–85), best known for his light operas, written to libretti by Goldoni. A toccata was originally a preliminary flourish over the notes, to try their touch and exhibit the execution of the performer; but it was developed by Bach into an important composition. No particular composition of Galuppi's is referred to in this poem.

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. The reference in stanza xxxiii to Mrs. Browning's *Casa Guidi Windows* shows that it was written after the middle of 1851, when that poem was published; consequently, *after* Browning's successful venture as a picture-purchaser, to which his wife refers in a letter of May 4, 1850: "Robert has been picking up pictures at a few pauls each . . . and the other day he covered himself with glory by discovering and seizing on (in a corn shop a mile from Florence) five

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pictures among heaps of trash ; and one of the best judges in Florence (Mr. Kirkup) throws out such names for them as Cimabue, Ghirlandaio, Giotto, etc." (*Letters of E. B. Browning*, i. 448). The allusions to the various Florentine painters would require a treatise on Renaissance art to explain fully ; but the general drift of the poem is plain enough. It may, however, be worth while to observe that the more familiar names of "Bigordi," "Sandro," and "Lippino" (stanza xxvi), are Ghirlandaio, Botticelli, and Filippino Lippi. In stanzas xxxii and xxxiii the allusions are to the abortive revolution of 1849.

"DE GUSTIBUS —"

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. Written, no doubt, in Italy ; but it is curious that the part selected for special description is in the kingdom of Naples, which Browning had not visited since 1844. The "king" is, of course, the Bourbon Ferdinand II of Naples, the notorious "Bomba," whose shooting would certainly have caused no grief either to patriotic Italians or to lovers of decent and humane government.

HOME THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD : HOME THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA

This companion pair of poems first appeared in print in 1845, in Part VII of *Bells and Pomegranates*, together with the little Nelson

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poem which now forms the third part of *Nationality in Drinks*. It was apparently due to Miss Barrett's urgency that they were provided with a title (*Home Thoughts from Abroad*), and not simply left to stand "between poem and poem, to break the shock of collision" (*Letters of R. B. and E. B. B.*, i. 229, 230).

The date of composition has been assigned by Mrs. Orr (*Life*, 1908, p. 94) to Browning's first voyage to Italy in 1838; and Mr. Hall Griffin, more precisely, states that the poet was in the exact position described in *Home Thoughts from the Sea* on April 27, 1838. It is, however, to be observed that in 1838 Browning (besides being very ill during the first fortnight of the voyage) tells Miss Haworth that he "did not write six lines while absent" (Mrs. Orr, *Life*, p. 91); hence it seems more probable that 1844, when Browning for the second time made the voyage to Italy, is the true date. The Nelson poem seems certainly to belong to this voyage; and see the introductory note to "*How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*."

SAUL

In its original form *Saul* appeared first in 1845, in Part VII of *Bells and Pomegranates*; but it was only a fragment, ending with what is now its ninth section. Browning was unable to complete it to his satisfaction at the time, but printed what was ready, and left its continuation to the future. Its completion must belong to the years between

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1849 and 1855; for in the collected *Poems* of 1849 it reappears in its original fragmentary state, while in the *Men and Women* of 1855 it has attained its full stature. The earlier sections do not rise much beyond a series of beautiful word-pictures; the greater and grander parts, which have given the poem its position as one of the best known and most thrilling of Browning's poems, belong, like so much of his best work, to the Italian period. Consequently it stands rightly in its present position, among the other poems of the same period now classified as "Dramatic Lyrics."

That Browning himself thought well of it appears in a letter of March, 1885, to Mr. E. Gosse, in which, in response to a request for "four poems, of moderate length, which represent their writer fairly," he names *Saul* or *Abt Vogler* as his selected lyrical poem (T. J. Wise, *Letters of R. Browning*, 2nd series, ii. 17).

MY STAR

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. As an expression of the essential individuality which alone gives value to either taste or experience, it was appropriately placed by the poet in the forefront of the volume of selected poems published under his own superintendence in 1872. Mrs. Bronson has recorded that this was the poem which he habitually chose, when asked to write a verse in the albums of admirers.

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BY THE FIRESIDE

This, perhaps the most intimate, and certainly one of the most beautiful, of Browning's lyrical poems, was first printed in *Men and Women*. It was written either during or soon after the Brownings' visit to Bagni di Lucca in the late summer of 1853; Mr. Hall Griffin locates its scenery at Prato Fiorito, to which they made a six-mile excursion at the end of September (*Letters of E. B. Browning*, ii. 142). Literally autobiographic it is not; but no one can doubt that it is spiritually autobiographic, and not dramatic, to an extent rare in Browning's poetry. As such, it is especially sacred to those who appreciate the beauty of the perfect picture of wedded love presented by the lives of Robert and Elizabeth Browning.

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. Standing next to *By the Fireside*, it presents a curious contrast: almost equally perfect in execution and poignant in expression, but essentially dramatic and not autobiographic. There is nothing to fix the precise date of composition, though it certainly belongs to the Italian period.

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. Presumably written in 1854, after the first residence of the Brownings in Rome, which took place in the winter and spring of 1853-54.

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MISCONCEPTIONS

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. The theme is rather a favourite one with Browning: see *Cristina* and *Colombe's Birthday*, and Pippa's song in the second episode of *Pippa Passes*.

A SERENADE AT THE VILLA

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. There is no evidence to show its date and place of composition, beyond the fact that it belongs to Italy.

ONE WAY OF LOVE: ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. The second member of the pair (in strong contrast to the admirable simplicity and beauty of the first) enjoys the distinction of being perhaps the most obscure of Browning's shorter poems.

A PRETTY WOMAN

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. Rather a metrical experiment than a serious poem.

RESPECTABILITY

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. Written no doubt during or after the Brownings' stay in Paris in 1851-52. "The Institute" which is taken as the symbol of all that is respectable, is of course the Institut de France, comprising the five Academies, of which the Académie Fran-

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çaise is the most famous. Guizot pronounced the "discours de reception" on the occasion of Montalembert's admission to the Academy on February 5, 1852. This supplies an approximate date for the poem.

LOVE IN A LIFE : LIFE IN A LOVE : IN THREE DAYS : IN A YEAR

All these poems appeared first in *Men and Women*, 1855. All are to some extent the expression of the same frame of mind, and were probably produced about the same time ; but there is nothing to fix their date, which may be anywhere in the years 1846-55.

WOMEN AND ROSES

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. According to Mr. Hall Griffin (*Life*, p. 189) it was written in Paris on January 2, 1852. The poem stands rather by itself, being unlike Browning's natural manner, and may actually be, as it professes to be, the expression of a dream. According to Mrs. Orr, however, it was suggested by some flowers sent to Mrs. Browning (*Life*, 1908, p. 302).

BEFORE : AFTER

A companion pair of poems, first printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. It is worth while to compare Browning's exposition of the ethics of duelling in his correspondence with Miss Barrett (*Letters of R. B. and E. B. B.*, ii. 46).

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THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. The visit to Fano, which it commemorates, was made in July, 1848. The place itself was found sufficiently unattractive, but there was "a divine picture of Guercino's, worth going all that way to see" (*Letters of E. B. Browning*, i. 380). Nearly two years later Mrs. Browning refers again to the "divine picture of the 'Guardian Angel,' which affects me every time I think of it" (*ib.*, i. 441). A photograph of the picture is given by Mr. Hall Griffin (*Life*, p. 166). Mrs. Browning's opinion of Guercino was, however, modified later, on a wider acquaintance with his work (*Letters*, ii. 9). Browning also seems to have revised his opinion subsequently: for in 1883, on receiving a print of the picture from Dr. Furnivall, he wrote to him: "I probably saw the original picture in a favourable darkness; it was blackened by taper-smoke, and one fancied the angel all but surrounded by cloud—only a light on the face" (Wise, *Letters of R. Browning*, ii. 11).

The poem was written at Ancona, to which place the Brownings fled from the excessive heat of Fano. The reference in stanza vi and in the last three lines is to Alfred Domett, Browning's intimate friend in the old Camberwell days and the subject of *Waring* (see below, in *Dramatic Romances*), at this time settled in New Zealand, near the river Wairau or Wairoa.

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MEMORABILIA

This is an echo of Browning's early worship of Shelley (see introduction to *Pauline*, vol. i. p. xii). The origin of the poem (which first appeared in *Men and Women*, 1855) is thus recorded by Mr. W. G. Kingsland (*Poet Lore*, ii. 131): "I remember on one occasion Browning narrating the incident that inspired these stanzas. He was in the shop of a then well-known London bookseller, when a stranger to himself entered, and commenced a conversation with the bookseller on Shelley—stating, *inter alia*, that he had both seen and spoken to him. While thus conversing, the stranger suddenly turned round, and burst into a laugh on observing how Browning was staring at him with blanched face: 'and,' said the poet, 'I have not yet forgotten how strangely the sight of one who had spoken with Shelley affected me.'" Browning was in London in the summers of 1851 and 1852, and in December 1851, while at Paris, he was writing his introduction to the spurious letters of Shelley. The poem therefore probably belongs to this period.

POPULARITY

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855.

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855.
"Master Hugues" is an imaginary composer,

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and the poem is chiefly remarkable for its description of a fugue. The technical definition of a fugue is thus given by Grove: "A musical movement in which a definite number of parts or voices combine in stating and developing a single theme, the interest being cumulative."

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

The original *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*, which formed Part VII of *Bells and Pomegranates*, published in 1845, contained, in its twenty-four pages of double-columned small print, the following twenty-one poems:

"How They brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix."

Pictor Ignotus.

Italy in England [= The Italian in England].

England in Italy [= The Englishman in Italy].

The Lost Leader.

The Lost Mistress.

Home Thoughts from Abroad [including Home Thoughts from the Sea].

The Tomb at St. Praxed's [= The Bishop orders his Tomb in St. Praxed's Church].

Garden Fancies:—

(i.) The Flower's Name.

(ii.) Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis.

France and Spain:—

(i.) The Laboratory.

(ii.) The Confessional.

The Flight of the Duchess.

Earth's Immortalities.

Song, "Nay, but you who do not love her."

The Boy and the Angel.

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Night and Morning [= Meeting at Night : Parting at Morning].

Claret and Tokay [= Nationality in Drinks].

Saul.

Time's Revenges.

The Glove.

In the subsequent rearrangement of the shorter poems in 1863 (see above, introduction to *Dramatic Lyrics*), thirteen of these poems were assigned to *Dramatic Lyrics* ("How They brought the Good News," *The Lost Leader*, *The Lost Mistress*, *Home Thoughts from Abroad*, *The Flower's Name*, *Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis*, *The Laboratory*, *The Confessional*, *Earth's Immortalities*, "Nay, but you who do not love her," *Night and Morning*, *Claret and Tokay*, *Saul*). Six remained under the title of *Dramatic Romances* (*Italy in England*, *England in Italy*, *The Flight of the Duchess*, *The Boy and the Angel*, *Time's Revenges*, *The Glove*); while two (*Pictor Ignotus* and *The Tomb at St. Praxed's*) were transferred to *Men and Women*.

As a whole, the *Dramatic Romances* of 1845 showed a considerable advance on the *Dramatic Lyrics* of 1842. There is more sustained power in *The Tomb at St. Praxed's*, *The Flight of the Duchess*, *Pictor Ignotus*, and *Saul* than in any of the contents of the earlier volume, and in these poems we feel the assured command of his subject which characterizes the *Men and Women* of 1855. Some of the shorter poems also ("How They brought the Good News," *The Lost Leader*, *Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis*, *The Laboratory*, "Nay, but you who do not love her") rank with the best

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of Browning's work in their respective kinds. It is no wonder that Miss Barrett, on the appearance of this part in 1845, was overwhelmed by "the sense of beauty and power everywhere," and read "everything with new delight" (*Letters of R. B. and E. B. B.*, i. 268). It was this part, also, that drew from Landor the fine and generous tribute from an older man to a younger, in the well-known lines, "Shakespeare is not our poet, but the world's." The notices in such papers as the *Examiner* and *Athenæum* were appreciative, though not very profound or discerning. Altogether, the original *Dramatic Romances* did something to redeem their author from the load of prejudice accumulated by the unfortunate *Sordello*, though the general public still remained strangely unappreciative and ignorant.

Dramatic Romances, as rearranged in 1863 and as here reprinted, contains twenty-five poems, of which only six belong to the original collection in Part VII of *Bells and Pomegranates*. Seven come from the earlier *Dramatic Lyrics* of 1842, and twelve from the *Men and Women* of 1855; and, as observed above in the introduction to *Dramatic Lyrics*, these separate strata must be distinguished, if the development of Browning's genius is to be followed. The introductions to the several poems show to which period each of them properly belongs.

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INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

First printed in Part III of *Bells and Pomegranates*, 1842, as the first part of *Camp and Cloister*, with the *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister* as its companion. The "incident" described in it occurred at the storming of Ratisbon by Napoleon in 1809; but, according to Mrs. Orr (*Handbook*, p. 300), the real hero was a man.

THE PATRIOT

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855, and no doubt written after the experience of the abortive revolution and counter-revolution in Florence in 1848-49. The contemplation of Italian politics at close quarters did not at first win from the Brownings, sympathetic though they were, that admiration which the principal actors amply earned at a later stage (see *Letters of E. B. Browning*, i. 383, 386, 388, 405, etc.). No actual incident of the time, however, is intended to be commemorated in the poem.

MY LAST DUCHESS: COUNT GISMOND

First printed in Part III of *Bells and Pomegranates*, 1842, with the common title, *Italy and France*. The first is a dramatic study of character, the second a romantic anecdote. The artists, Frà Pandolf and Claus of Innsbruck, named in *My Last Duchess* are imaginary.

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THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

First printed in *Hood's Magazine* for August, 1844, under the circumstances described in the introduction to *Nationality in Drinks* (above, p. xiv). Reprinted in Part VII of *Bells and Pomegranates*, 1845, with some alterations and the addition of five couplets.

INSTANS TYRANNUS

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. The interpolation of this poem and the next, which belong to the Italian period, among a group of earlier poems from *Bells and Pomegranates*, breaks the historical sequence, and is difficult to account for, unless they are poems which had been composed several years previously, but not included in any earlier volume.

MESMERISM

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. There is nothing to show its date. Mesmerism was much in vogue in 1844 and 1845, but since the poem was not included in the *Dramatic Romances* of the latter year, nor in the collected *Poems* of 1849, it is perhaps more probable that it belongs to the early stages of the spiritualist movement, which begin to be prominent in Mrs. Browning's correspondence in 1852. It could not well be later than this, since the tone is not consistent

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with the distaste for the subject which Browning developed soon after this date; and it may be a survival from an earlier period.

THE GLOVE

First printed in Part VII of *Bells and Pomegranates*, 1845. It is a kind of counterblast to Leigh Hunt's poem on the same subject, which appeared in the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1836; but there is nothing to show how soon afterwards it was written, except that it was not included in the *Dramatic Lyrics* of 1842. The moral of the story is characteristically inverted by Browning, giving it a far more delicate psychological interest. The narrative is put into the mouth of the famous French poet, Pierre Ronsard, the court poet of Francis I, in whose presence the incident is supposed to have occurred. With its anapæstic rhythm and double rhymes, it is one of Browning's earliest experiments in fanciful prosody.

TIME'S REVENGES

First printed in Part VII of *Bells and Pomegranates*, 1845. It has been suggested that the first part has some reference to Browning's friend, Alfred Domett; but, except the phrase, "over the sea," there is nothing that can be said to have any real connection with him, or with biographical fact, any more than there is in the second part.

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THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND : THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY

This pair of poems was first printed in Part VII of *Bells and Pomegranates*, 1845, under the titles of *Italy in England* and *England in Italy*. The former is a vivid picture of Italy under the Austrian rule, after the foundation by Mazzini in 1831 of the movement of "Young Italy" which ultimately led, through the failure of 1848, to the triumph of Garibaldi, Cavour, and Victor Emmanuel in 1861. But its immediate occasion may probably have been the rising of the two Bandiera brothers in 1844, which ended in the betrayal of the patriots by one of their party, and the execution of the leaders. This, however, took place in Neapolitan territory, while the scene of the poem is laid in the neighbourhood of Padua; but Browning visited Naples in the very year of the occurrence, which attracted much attention in England, and it cannot be doubted that his poem was coloured, if not suggested, by it. The poem was published in 1845; and Mazzini, who was then living in exile in England, subsequently informed Browning that he had read it to some of his fellow-exiles, to show how an Englishman could sympathize with them (Mrs. Orr, *Handbook*, p. 306).

The companion poem, *The Englishman in Italy*, is a product of the same visit to Naples in the autumn of 1844, for its scene is laid in the plain

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of Sorrento. It is purely a picture of south Italian scenery and rural life, the only political allusion (except the parenthesis, "How fair ! but a slave") being to the Corn Law controversy then raging in England. An important debate took place early in March, 1845, and Browning's poem may have been written then, when his Italian recollections were fresh in his head.

IN A GONDOLA

The origin of this poem is recorded by Browning himself in a letter written to Miss Haworth about the end of 1841 (Mrs. Orr's *Life*, 1908, p. 124).

"I chanced to call on Forster the other day, and he pressed me into committing verse on the instant, not the minute, in Maclise's behalf, who has wrought a divine Venetian work, it seems, for the British Institute. Forster described it well,—but I could do nothing better than this wooden ware—(all the 'properties,' as we say, were given, and the problem was how to catalogue them in rhyme and unreason).

'I send my heart up to thee . . . its dwelling place.'

Singing and stars and night and Venice streets and joyous heart are properties, do you please to see? And now tell me, is this below the average of catalogue original poetry?"

The picture was entitled "The Serenade." After seeing the picture, Browning subsequently

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told Dr. Furnivall, "I thought the serenader too jolly, somehow, for the notion I got from Forster, and I took up the subject in my own way" (Wise, *Letters of R. Browning*, i. 72). The poem, as so continued, was included in Part III of *Bells and Pomegranates*, published in 1842; and was again considerably revised before its appearance in the collected *Poems* of 1849.

The painters referred to in ll. 186-190 are Bartolommeo Schedone, Luca Giordano (nicknamed Luca Fa-presto), and Giorgione of Castelfranco.

WARING

This poem, which appeared in Part III of *Bells and Pomegranates*, though not strictly biographical in its details, has for its subject Browning's early friend, Alfred Domett. For the history of this friendship, see *Robert Browning and Alfred Domett* (1906). It began about 1840, when Browning was living at Camberwell, and Domett was preparing to be called to the Bar. He was duly called in 1841, but in the following spring he suddenly (though not so suddenly or mysteriously as the poem suggests) threw up his prospects in England, and migrated to the newly founded colony of New Zealand, where he occupied various official posts, ultimately becoming Premier in 1862. In 1871 he returned to England, bringing with him the manuscript of his New Zealand epic, *Ranolf and Anohia*. His friendship with Browning, which had been in suspense for lack of correspondence after the latter's marriage, was

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then resumed, and in 1877 he dedicated a volume of poems (*Flotsam and Jetsam*) to him in the warmest terms. Browning's extant letters to him (chiefly between 1842 and 1846) are printed in the above-named volume. The part of *Bells and Pomegranates* which contained *Waring* was sent to him with a letter of Dec. 13, 1842.

THE TWINS

This poem, together with Mrs. Browning's *Song for the Ragged Schools of London*, was written in the spring of 1854, while the two poets were in Rome, in response to an appeal from Miss Arabel Barrett, Mrs. Browning's sister, for something to be printed under their joint names, and to be sold at a bazaar in aid of a Refuge or training school which she had founded. The little pamphlet, entitled *Two Poems, by Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning*, is now extremely rare.

The names of the twins in Luther's parable are, being interpreted, "Give" and "It shall be given unto you"; and the poem was no doubt specially written for the occasion. It was reprinted in *Men and Women* in the following year. The story is older than Luther, appearing in Odo of Cheriton and other mediæval collections of moral tales.

A LIGHT WOMAN: THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

Both poems were first printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. There is nothing to fix the occasion or date of composition of either.

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THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

This poem, together with *The Cardinal and the Dog* (published in *Asolando*), was written in May, 1842, to amuse Willie Macready, the actor's son, who was to beguile a time of illness by making illustrations to them. In September or October of the same year, when Part III of *Bells and Pomegranates* was in the press, the printer reported that the "copy" did not suffice to fill the prescribed sixteen pages; and the *Pied Piper* (which has some claim to be the most widely known of all Browning's poems!) was sent to fill the gap, while its companion poem had to wait for forty-seven years to attain the honours of print. By an odd coincidence, Browning's father at about the same time began to versify the same story, but desisted when he discovered the existence of his son's poem.

Mr. Hall Griffin (*Life*, p. 21) points out that Browning probably derived his knowledge of the story from Wanley's *Wonders of the Little World* (1676) and Howell's *Epistolæ Hoelianæ* (1645), which were in his father's library. I owe to Dr. F. A. Bather the sight of a letter, written by the poet in the last year of his life in response to one calling his attention to a reference to the story in a work by Albrecht Ritter in 1743, in which the number of children decoyed away by the Piper is stated as 130, and the date said to be 1284. In this Browning refers in general terms to the

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authorities for the tale, and adds, "I forget which—or how many of them—I had in my head when I wrote the verses. The dates disagreed—there was as much authority for July as June, I think."

Another authority for the story which may have been used by Browning is R. Verstegan's *Restitution of Decayed Intelligence in Antiquities* (1605). Mr. W. T. Young (*Robert Browning: A Selection of Poems*, Cambridge, 1911) points out that Browning's version agrees with Verstegan's in three important particulars, viz. in the date (1376), in placing Hamelin in Brunswick (instead of Hanover), and in his mention of the strange tribe in Transylvania.

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

The first nine stanzas of this poem were written not later than the first months of 1842, and the remainder in September of that year. The poem was not, however, included in Part III of *Bells and Pomegranates*, which appeared in the following month, being perhaps considered too long; and when a sudden demand came for a contribution to *Hood's Magazine* for April, 1845, only the original nine stanzas were sent. The complete poem appeared in print for the first time in Part VII of *Bells and Pomegranates*, in November, 1845.

The circumstances of its composition are thus recorded by Browning in a letter of April 15,

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1883, to Dr. Furnivall (Wise, *Letters of R. Browning*, ii. 17) :

“ My poor friend, Miss Haworth, was the first to call my attention, long ago, to the existence of the old ballad of *Johnnie Faa*—which I was in total ignorance about when I wrote the poem some years before. There was an odd circumstance that either mended or marred the poem in the writing, I fancied the latter at the time. As I finished the line (which ends what was printed in *Hood's Magazine*) ‘and the old one—you shall hear!’ I saw from the window where I sat a friend opening the gate to our house, one Captain Lloyd, whom I jumped up to meet, judging from the time of day that something especially interesting had brought him—as proved to be the case, for he was in a strange difficulty. This took a deal of discussing. Next day other interruptions occurred, and the end was I lost altogether the thing as it was in my head at the beginning, and, subsequently, gave it to Hood as a fragment. Some time afterwards I was staying at Bettisfield Park, in Wales, and a guest, speaking of early winter, said ‘the deer had already to break the ice in the pond.’ A fancy struck me, which, on returning home, I worked up into what concludes the story—which originally all grew out of this one intelligible line of a song that I heard a woman singing at a bonfire Guy Faux night when I was a boy—*Following the Queen of the Gypsies, O!* From so slender a twig of fact can these little singing birds start themselves for a flight to more or less distances.”

The “some time afterwards,” in the above

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letter, must mean after the composition of the first part of the poem, not after its publication in *Hood*; for the visit to Sir John Hanmer at Bettisfield Park took place in September, 1842 (*R. Browning and A. Domett*, p. 44), and the publication in April, 1845. There are several allusions to the poem in the correspondence between Browning and Miss Barrett, which show that in 1845 he had the whole poem by him in a rough state; that, being called upon at a moment's notice to help Hood, he wrote out "so much as he could transcribe" (but presumably with an eye also to the original break in the poem); and that he then worked over the conclusion, and printed it in Part VII of *Bells and Pomegranates* in November of the same year. With regard to the original conception of the poem, he tells Miss Barrett (i. 139): "As I conceived the poem, it consisted entirely of the Gipsy's description of the life the Lady was to lead with her future Gipsy lover—a *real* life, not an unreal one like that with the Duke. And as I meant to write it, all their wild adventures would have come out and the insignificance of the former vegetation have been deducible only—as the main subject has become now; of course it comes to the same thing, for one would never show half by half like a cut orange."

Miss Barrett's admiration of the poem, with its beauty of conception, its sometimes quaint and sometimes poetical and always vivid particularity of description, and its ingenious and

INTRODUCTION

effective metrical construction, is repeatedly expressed in her side of the correspondence; and subsequent readers have fully confirmed her judgment.

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. Mr. W. T. Young believes that the suggestion of the poem may have been found in the work of Nathaniel Wanley from which Browning derived the story of the Pied Piper (see above, p. xl). One of the chapters in this book is entitled "Of the exceeding intentness of some men upon their Meditations and Studies"; and among the examples is a German physician, Jacobus Milichius, whose intense application to study, in spite of the remonstrances of his friends, was eventually the cause of his death (in 1559). The resemblance, however, is very general, and is not confirmed by any close correspondence in detail; while the date is later than that which would naturally be suggested by the poem. Moreover, since the poem was in all probability written after Browning's marriage (since it was not included in *Bells and Pomegranates*), he had not his father's library at his elbow. Hence, if the seed was originally sown by Wanley, it must have fructified among Italian surroundings; and the local colouring is more likely to come from Italy, which he knew, than from Germany, which he did not, though the latter might have been sufficiently suggested to him by prints of the school of Dürer.

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But, in truth, the origin and the setting of the poem are of little moment. Its charm and appeal depend, not upon associations of time and place, but on the characteristic confidence with which it asserts the virtues of aspiration, of effort, and of trust in God. It is the direct expression of one side of Browning's character,—the same note as in *Prospice* and the *Epilogue to Asolando*, though in a different key.

THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY: HOLY-CROSS DAY

Two studies of mediæval religious persecution follow, both of which appeared first in *Men and Women*, 1855. The first, *The Heretic's Tragedy*, is in the lighter vein, though horrible enough in subject, which is the burning of Jacques de Molay, Grand Master of the Temple, at Paris in 1314, when the order of the Templars was suppressed. The second, *Holy-Cross Day*, though it begins in a similar tone of boisterous levity, turns, in the last nine stanzas, into one of the finest and most dignified assertions of religious faith and constancy. Pope Gregory XVI, who abolished the practice (intermittent rather than perennial) of the sermon, died in 1846, before the Brownings arrived in Rome; so that the poem must have been based either on reminiscences of Browning's visit in 1844 (when, however, he did not reach Rome until after Holy-Cross Day, Sept. 14th), or, more probably, on tradition.

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PROTUS

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. It has no literal foundation in history.

THE STATUE AND THE BUST

This poem appeared in *Men and Women*, 1855; but it was also printed as a separate pamphlet in the same year, by a different publisher (Moxon, instead of Chapman and Hall). The same was the case with *Cleon*; and there appears to be no record of the reason for these departures from Browning's usual practice.

The "statue" is that of Duke Ferdinand, by Giovanni da Bologna (also called Jean de Douai), which stands in the Piazza dall' Annunziata in Florence. The palace is that of the Riccardi (now known as the Palazzo Antinori; the present Palazzo Riccardi in the Via Larga belonged to the Medici at the date of the story). Duke Ferdinand died in 1608. The story is based on a tradition associated with the statue, which looks towards the palace in question; for the bust (which cannot have been the work of either of the della Robbias, since they belonged to a period nearly a century earlier) there is no warrant in the tradition. See an article by Dr. W. J. Rolfe in *Poet Lore*, May 1891.

PORPHYRIA'S LOVER

First printed in the *Monthly Repository* (the periodical edited by W. J. Fox) in January, 1836,

INTRODUCTION

together with *Johannes Agricola*. The two were reprinted in Part III of *Bells and Pomegranates* (1842), with the common title of *Madhouse Cells*. They remained associated in the collected *Poems* of 1849; but in the edition of 1863 they were parted, though both were included in the section of "Romances." In the edition of 1868, however, they were separated more widely, *Porphyria* (as the poem was originally called in its magazine form) remaining in the section of "Dramatic Romances," while *Johannes Agricola* was transferred to "Men and Women." The reason for the separation of the two poems, which are naturally companions both in character and in metre, is not clear. Both are astonishingly mature and original for a poet of twenty-four.

"CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME"

First printed in *Men and Women*, 1855. It was written in Paris in January, 1852, being (according to Mrs. Orr, *Life*, 1908, p. 362) one of a series of poems produced at the rate of one a day for a fortnight. Its explanation has always been a favourite exercise in Browning Societies, and many ingenious meanings have been extracted from it; but it seems preferable to regard it as merely a fantasia on the theme of Edgar's song in *King Lear*. As elements in the elaboration of the theme Mrs. Orr mentions (presumably on the poet's own authority) "a tower which Mr. Browning once saw in the Carrara Mountains, a painting

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which caught his eye later in Paris, and the picture of a horse in the tapestry in his own drawing-room" (*Handbook*, p. 274).

ADDITIONAL POEMS

SONNET—"EYES CALM BESIDE THEE"

Three poems are here appended, which belong to the same period as the *Dramatic Lyrics* and *Dramatic Romances* contained in this volume, but which have not previously been included in any collected edition of the poet's works. The sonnet which stands first is interesting from its early date, and from its being the first of Browning's rare contributions to periodical literature. It was published in Mr. W. J. Fox's magazine, *The Monthly Repository*, in October, 1834, and bears the date of August 17 in that year, with the signature "Z." Browning's subsequent contributions to this magazine (all with the same signature) were the song "A King lived long ago" (afterwards incorporated in *Pippa Passes*), *Porphyria*, *Johannes Agricola*, and the lines, "Still ailing, wind," which reappeared in 1864 in *James Lee's Wife*.

The present sonnet has been reprinted in the Browning Society's *Papers*, Part XII, in Nicoll and Wise's *Literary Anecdotes*, p. 469, and in Hall Griffin and Minchin's *Life of Browning*, p. 306. The circumstances of its composition are not known.

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A FOREST THOUGHT

This early and attractive poem was written on November 4, 1837, on the occasion of Browning standing godfather to the eldest son of his friend William Alexander Dow. He was asked to write something in an album after the christening, and these lines were produced on the spot. The album is still preserved in the family of the poet's friend, but the poem never appeared in print until 1905, when it was published in the periodical *Country Life* (June 10). It was reprinted in *Robert Browning and Alfred Domett*, 1906, p. xi, and in Hall Griffin and Minchin's *Life*, p. 305.

The opening lines are a reminiscence of Browning's visit to Russia in the winter of 1833-4.

BEN KARSHOOK'S WISDOM

This poem is of later date, belonging to the Italian period of Browning's life. It appeared in *The Keepsake* for 1856, with the date, Rome, April 27, 1854, but was not reprinted until it appeared in the first part of the Browning Society's *Papers* in 1881. It has since been reprinted in Mr. W. G. Kingsland's *Robert Browning, Chief Poet of the Age*, 1890, p. 26; in Mr. W. Sharp's *Life of Browning*, 1890, p. 167; in Mrs. Orr's *Life*, 1891 (p. 198 of the edition of 1908); in Nicoll and Wise's *Literary Anecdotes*, 1895, p. 450; and in Hall Griffin and Minchin's *Life*, p. 307.

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In the poem, *One Word More*, which forms the epilogue to the *Men and Women* of 1855, occurred (in the original edition, and in the *Poetical Works* of 1863 and 1868) the line "Karshook, Cleon, Norbert and the fifty." This, however, was a slip of the pen. *Karshook* cannot have formed one of the fifty when the epilogue was written, less than two months before the publication of the volumes; and in 1881, in reply to an inquiry from Dr. Furnivall, Browning wrote as follows: "*Karshish* is the proper word, referring as it does to him of the 'Epistle.' *Karshook* (*Heb.*: a Thistle) just belongs to the snarling verses I remember to have written, but forget for whom; the other was the only one of the Fifty" (Wise, *Letters of Robert Browning*, i. 71). The correction appeared in the Tauchnitz edition of 1872, and in subsequent English editions (certainly from 1879 onwards).

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PORTRAIT

ROBERT BROWNING (AGED 48)

*From the painting by Gordigiani, 1860, in the possession
of R. Barrett Browning* FRONTISPIECE

L U R I A

A TRAGEDY

VOL. III

A

PERSONS

LURIA, *a Moor, Commander of the Florentine Forces*

HUSAIN, *a Moor, his friend*

PUCCIO, *the old Florentine Commander, now LURIA'S chief officer*

BRACCIO, *Commissary of the Republic of Florence*

JACOPO (LAPO), *his secretary*

TIBURZIO, *Commander of the Pisans*

DOMIZIA, *a noble Florentine lady*

SCENE.—LURIA'S *Camp between Florence and Pisa*

TIME, 14—

LURIA

1846

ACT I

MORNING

BRACCIO, *as dictating to his Secretary* ; PUCCIO
standing by

Braccio [*to PUCCIO*]. Then, you join battle in
an hour ?

Puccio. Not I ;

Luria, the captain.

Braccio [*to the Secretary*]. “ In an hour, the
battle.”

[*To PUCCIO*.] Sir, let your eye run o’er this loose
digest,

And see if very much of your report
Have slipped away through my civilian phrase. 5
Does this instruct the Signory aright
How army stands with army ?

Puccio [*taking the paper*]. All seems here :
—That Luria, seizing with our city’s force
The several points of vantage, hill and plain,
Shuts Pisa safe from help on every side, 10
And, baffling the Lucchese arrived too late,
Must, in the battle he delivers now,
Beat her best troops and first of chiefs.

LURIA

ACT I

Braccio.

So sure?

Tiburzio 's a consummate captain too!

Puccio. Luria holds Pisa's fortune in his hand. 15

Braccio [to the Secretary]. "The Signory hold Pisa in their hand."

Your own proved soldiership 's our warrant, sir :

So, while my secretary ends his task,

Have out two horsemen, by the open roads,

To post with it to Florence!

Puccio [returning the paper]. All seems here ; 20

Unless . . . Ser Braccio, 't is my last report!

Since Pisa's outbreak, and my overthrow,

And Luria's hastening at the city's call

To save her, as he only could, no doubt ;

Till now that she is saved or sure to be,— 25

Whatever you tell Florence, I tell you :

Each day's note you, her Commissary, make

Of Luria's movements, I myself supply.

No youngster am I longer, to my cost ;

Therefore while Florence gloried in her choice 30

And vaunted Luria, whom but Luria, still,

As if zeal, courage, prudence, conduct, faith,

Had never met in any man before,

I saw no pressing need to swell the cry.

But now, this last report and I have done : 35

So, ere to-night comes with its roar of praise,

'T were not amiss if some one old i' the trade

Subscribed with, "True, for once rash counsel 's best.

"This Moor of the bad faith and doubtful race,

"This boy to whose untried sagacity, 40

"Raw valour, Florence trusts without reserve

"The charge to save her,—justifies her choice ;

"In no point has this stranger failed his friends.

"Now praise !" I say this, and it is not here.

Braccio [to the Secretary]. Write, "Puccio,
superseded in the charge,

45

"By Luria, bears full witness to his worth,

"And no reward our Signory can give

"Their champion but he 'll back it cheerfully."

Aught more? Five minutes hence, both mes-
sengers! [*Puccio goes.*]

Braccio [after a pause, and while he slowly tears
the paper into shreds]. I think . . . (pray God,
I hold in fit contempt

50

This warfare's noble art and ordering,

And,—once the brace of prizers fairly matched,
Poleaxe with poleaxe, knife with knife as good,—
Spit properly at what men term their skill!—)

Yet here I think our fighter has the odds.

55

With Pisa's strength diminished thus and thus,

Such points of vantage in our hands and such,

Lucca still off the stage, too,—all 's assured :

Luria must win this battle. Write the Court,

That Luria's trial end and sentence pass !

60

Secretary. Patron,—

Braccio.

Ay, Lapo ?

Secretary.

If you trip, I fall ;

'T is in self-interest I speak—

Braccio.

Nay, nay,

You overshoot the mark, my Lapo ! Nay !

When did I say pure love 's impossible ?

I make you daily write those red cheeks thin,

65

Load your young brow with what concerns it least,

And, when we visit Florence, let you pace

The Piazza by my side as if we talked,

Where all your old acquaintances may see :

You 'd die for me, I should not be surprised.

70

Now then !

Secretary. Sir, look about and love yourself !
Step after step, the Signory and you

LURIA

ACT I

Tread gay till this tremendous point 's to pass ;
Which pass not, pass not, ere you ask yourself,—
Bears the brain steadily such draughts of fire, 75
Or too delicious may not prove the pride
Of this long secret trial you dared plan,
Dare execute, you solitary here,
With the grey-headed toothless fools at home,
Who think themselves your lords, such slaves are
they ? 80
If they pronounce this sentence as you bid,
Declare the treason, claim its penalty,—
And sudden out of all the blaze of life,
On the best minute of his brightest day,
From that adoring army at his back, 85
Thro' Florence' joyous crowds before his face,
Into the dark you beckon Luria. . . .

Braccio.

Then—

Why, Lapo, when the fighting-people vaunt,
We of the other craft and mystery,
May we not smile demure, the danger past ? 90

Secretary. Sir, no, no, no,—the danger, and
your spirit

At watch and ward ? Where 's danger on your
part,

With that thin flitting instantaneous steel
'Gainst the blind bull-front of a brute-force world ?
If Luria, that 's to perish sure as fate, 95
Should have been really guiltless after all ?

Braccio. Ah, you have thought that ?

Secretary.

Here I sit, your scribe,

And in and out goes Luria, days and nights ;
This Puccio comes ; the Moor his other friend,
Husain ; they talk—that 's all feigned easily ; 100
He speaks (I would not listen if I could),
Reads, orders, counsels:—butherestssometimes,—
I see him stand and eat, sleep stretched an hour

On the lynx-skins yonder; hold his bared black arms
 Into the sun from the tent-opening; laugh 105
 When his horse drops the forage from his teeth
 And neighs to hear him hum his Moorish songs.
 That man believes in Florence, as the saint
 Tied to the wheel believes in God.

Braccio. How strange!

You too have thought that!

Secretary. Do but you think too, 110
 And all is saved! I only have to write,
 "The man seemed false awhile, proves true at last,
 "Bury it"—so I write the Signory—
 "Bury this trial in your breast for ever,
 "Blot it from things or done or dreamed about! 115
 "So Luria shall receive his meed to-day
 "With no suspicion what reverse was near,—
 "As if no meteoric finger hushed
 "The doom-word just on the destroyer's lip,
 "Motioned him off, and let life's sun fall straight." 120

Braccio [*looks to the wall of the tent*]. Did he draw that?

Secretary. With charcoal, when the watch
 Made the report at midnight; Lady Domizia
 Spoke of the unfinished Duomo, you remember;
 That is his fancy how a Moorish front
 Might jointo, and complete, the body,—a sketch,— 125
 And again where the cloak hangs, yonder in the
 shadow.

Braccio. He loves that woman.

Secretary. She is sent the spy
 Of Florence,—spies on you as you on him:
 Florence, if only for Domizia's sake,
 Is surely safe. What shall I write?

Braccio. I see— 130
 A Moorish front, nor of such ill design!
 Lapò, there's one thing plain and positive;

LURIA

ACT I

Man seeks his own good at the whole world's cost.
What? If to lead our troops, stand forth our chiefs,
And hold our fate, and see us at their beck, 135
Yet render up the charge when peace return,
Have ever proved too much for Florentines,
Even for the best and bravest of ourselves—
If in the struggle when the soldier's sword
Should sink its point before the statist's pen, 140
And the calm head replace the violent hand,
Virtue on virtue still have fallen away
Before ambition with unvarying fate,
Till Florence' self at last in bitterness
Be forced to own such falls the natural end, 145
And, sparing further to expose her sons
To a vain strife and profitless disgrace,
Declare, "The foreigner, one not my child,
"Shall henceforth lead my troops, reach height
by height
"The glory, then descend into the shame ; 150
"So shall rebellion be less guilt in him,
"And punishment the easier task for me" :
—If on the best of us such brand she set,
Can I suppose an utter alien here,
This Luria, our inevitable foe, 155
Confessed a mercenary and a Moor,
Born free from many ties that bind the rest
Of common faith in Heaven or hope on earth,
No past with us, no future,—such a spirit
Shall hold the path from which our staunchest
broke, 160
Stand firm where every famed precursor fell?
My Lapo, I will frankly say, these proofs
So duly noted of the man's intent,
Are for the doting fools at home, not me.
The charges here, they may be true or false : 165
—What is set down? Errors and oversights,

A dallying interchange of courtesies
With Pisa's General,—all that, hour by hour,
Puccio's pale discontent has furnished us,
Of petulant speeches, inconsiderate acts, 170
Now overhazard, overcaution now ;
Even that he loves this lady who believes
She outwits Florence, and whom Florence posted
By my procurement here, to spy on me,
Lest I one minute lose her from my sight— 175
She who remembering her whole House's fall,
That nest of traitors strangled in the birth,
Now labours to make Luria (poor device
As plain) the instrument of her revenge
—That she is ever at his ear to prompt 180
Inordinate conceptions of his worth,
Exorbitant belief in worth's reward,
And after, when sure disappointment follows,
Proportionable rage at such a wrong—
Why, all these reasons, while I urge them most, 185
Weigh with me less than least—as nothing weigh.
Upon that broad man's-heart of his, I go :
On what I know must be, yet, while I live,
Shall never be, because I live and know.
Brute-force shall not rule Florence ! Intellect 190
May rule her, bad or good as chance supplies :
But intellect it shall be, pure if bad,
And intellect's tradition so kept up.
Till the good come—'t was intellect that ruled,
Not brute-force bringing from the battle-field 195
The attributes of wisdom, foresight's graces
We lent it there to lure its grossness on ;
All which it took for earnest and kept safe
To show against us in our market-place,
Just as the plumes and tags and swordsman's-gear 200
(Fetched from the camp where, at their foolish best,
When all was done they frightened nobody)

Perk in our faces in the street, forsooth,
With our own warrant and allowance. No !
The whole procedure 's overcharged,—its end 205
In too strict keeping with the bad first step.
To conquer Pisa was sheer inspiration ?
Well then, to perish for a single fault,
Let that be simple justice ! There, my Lapo !
A Moorish front ill suits our Duomo's body : 210
Blot it out—and bid Luria's sentence come !

[LURIA, *who, with DOMIZIA, has entered un-
observed at the close of the last phrase,
now advances.*

Luria. And Luria, Luria, what of Luria now ?

Braccio. Ah, you so close, sir ? Lady Domizia
too ?

I said it needs must be a busy moment
For one like you : that you were now i' the thick 215
Of your duties, doubtless, while we idlers sat . . .

Luria. No—in that paper,—it was in that paper
What you were saying !

Braccio. Oh—my day's despatch !

I censure you to Florence : will you see ?

Luria. See your despatch, your last, for the
first time ? 220

Well, if I should, now ? For in truth, Domizia,
He would be forced to set about another,
In his sly cool way, the true Florentine,
To mention that important circumstance.
So, while he wrote I should gain time, such time ! 225
Do not send this !

Braccio. And wherefore ?

Luria. These Lucchese

Are not arrived—they never will arrive !
And I must fight to-day, arrived or not,
And I shall beat Tiburzio, that is sure :
And then will be arriving his Lucchese, 230

But slowly, oh so slowly, just in time
To look upon my battle from the hills,
Like a late moon, of use to nobody !
And I must break my battle up, send forth,
Surround on this side, hold in check on that. 235
Then comes to-morrow, we negotiate,
You make me send for fresh instructions home,
—Incompleteness, incompleteness !

Braccio. Ah, we scribes !

Why, I had registered that very point,
The non-appearance of our foes' ally, 240
As a most happy fortune ; both at once
Were formidable : singly faced, each falls.

Luria. So, no great battle for my Florentines !
No crowning deed, decisive and complete,
For all of them, the simple as the wise, 245
Old, young, alike, that do not understand
Our wearisome pedantic art of war,
By which we prove retreat may be success,
Delay—best speed,—half loss, at times,—whole
gain :

They want results : as if it were their fault ! 250
And you, with warmest wish to be my friend,
Will not be able now to simply say

“ Your servant has performed his task—enough !

“ You ordered, he has executed : good !

“ Now walk the streets in holiday attire, 255

“ Congratulate your friends, till noon strikes fierce,

“ Then form bright groups beneath the Duomo's
shade ! ”

No, you will have to argue and explain,
Persuade them, all is not so ill in the end,
Tease, tire them out ! Arrive, arrive, Lucchese ! 260

Domizia. Well, you will triumph for the past
enough,

Whatever be the present chance ; no service

Falls to the ground with Florence : she awaits
Her saviour, will receive him fittingly.

Luria. Ah Braccio, you know Florence ! Will
she, think you, 265
Receive one . . . what means “fittingly receive” ?
—Receive compatriots, doubtless—I am none :
And yet Domizia promises so much !

Braccio. Kind women still give men a woman’s
prize.
I know not o’er which gate most boughs will arch, 270
Nor if the Square will wave red flags or blue.
I should have judged, the fullest of rewards
Our state gave Luria, when she made him chief
Of her whole force, in her best captain’s place.

Luria. That, my reward ? Florence on my
account 275
Relieved Ser Puccio ?—mark you, my reward !
And Puccio’s having all the fight’s true joy—
Goes here and there, gets close, may fight, himself,
While I must order, stand aloof, o’ersee.
That was my calling, there was my true place ! 280
I should have felt, in some one over me,
Florence impersonate, my visible head,
As I am over Puccio,—taking life
Directly from her eye ! They give me you :
But do you cross me, set me half to work ? 285
I enjoy nothing—though I will, for once !
Decide, shall we join battle ? may I wait ?

Braccio. Let us compound the matter ; wait till
noon :

Then, no arrival,—

Luria. Ah, noon comes too fast !
I wonder, do you guess why I delay 290
Involuntarily the final blow
As long as possible ? Peace follows it !
Florence at peace, and the calm studious heads

Come out again, the penetrating eyes ;
As if a spell broke, all 's resumed, each art 295
You boast, more vivid that it slept awhile.

'Gainst the glad heaven, o'er the white palace-front
The interrupted scaffold climbs anew ;
The walls are peopled by the painter's brush ;
The statue to its niche ascends to dwell. 300

The present noise and trouble have retired
And left the eternal past to rule once more ;
You speak its speech and read its records plain,
Greece lives with you, each Roman breathes your
friend :

But Luria—where will then be Luria's place? 305
Domizia. Highest in honour, for that past's
own sake,

Of which his actions, sealing up the sum
By saving all that went before from wreck,
Will range as part, with which be worshipped too.

Luria. Then I may walk and watch you in
your streets, 310

Lead the smooth life my rough life helps no more,
So different, so new, so beautiful—

Nor fear that you will tire to see parade
The club that slew the lion, now that crooks
And shepherd-pipes come into use again? 315

For very lone and silent seems my East
In its drear vastness : still it spreads, and still
No Braccios, no Domizias anywhere—

Not ever more ! Well, well, to-day is ours !

Domizia [*to BRACCIO*]. Should he not have been
one of us?

Luria. Oh, no ! 320

Not one of you, and so escape the thrill
Of coming into you, of changing thus,—
Feeling a soul grow on me that restricts
The boundless unrest of the savage heart !

LURIA

ACT I

sea heaves up, hangs loaded o'er the land, 325
 ks there and buries its tumultuous strength ;
 or, and silence, and a pause awhile :
 nland glides the gulf-stream, miles away,
 pture of assent, subdued and still,
 th those strange banks, those unimagined skies. 330
 , 't is not sure the quiet lasts for ever !
 ' placid heads still find rough hands new work ;
 e minute's chance—there comes the need of
 mine :

all resolved on, I too hear at last.
 you must find some use for me, Ser Braccio ! 335
 hold my strength ; 't were best dispose of it :
 t you created, see that you find food for—
 ill be dangerous else !

Braccio. How dangerous, sir?

Luria. There are so many ways, Domizia warns
 me,

one with half the power that I possess, 340
 'ows very formidable. Do you doubt ?
 , first, who holds the army . . .

Domizia. While we talk,
 n wears ; we keep you from your proper place,
 field.

Luria. Nay, to the field I move no more ;
 part is done, and Puccio's may begin : 345
 not trench upon his province longer
 n any face.—You think yourselves so safe ?
 , see—in concert with Tiburzio, now—
 could . . .

Domizia. A trumpet !

Luria. My Lucchese at last !
 ved, as sure as Florence stands ! Your leave ! 350

[*Springs out.*]

Domizia. How plainly is true greatness charac-
 tered

By such unconscious sport as Luria's here,
Strength sharing least the secret of itself!
Be it with head that schemes or hand that acts,
Such save the world which none but they could
save, 355

Yet think whate'er they did, that world could do.

Braccio. Yes : and how worthy note, that these
same great ones

In hand or head, with such unconsciousness
And all its due entailed humility,
Should never shrink, so far as I perceive, 360
From taking up whatever tool there be
Effects the whole world's safety or mishap,
Into their mild hands as a thing of course !
The statist finds it natural to lead

The mob who might as easily lead him— 365

The captain marshals troops born skilled in war—
Statist and captain verily believe !

While we poor scribes . . . you catch me think-
ing now,

That I shall in this very letter write

What none of you are able ! To it, Lapo ! 370

[DOMIZIA goes.]

This last worst all-affected childish fit

Of Luria's, this be-praised unconsciousness,
Convinces me ; the past was no child's play :

It was a man beat Pisa,—not a child.

All 's mere dissimulation—to remove 375

The fear, he best knows we should entertain.

The utmost danger was at hand. Is 't written ?

Now make a duplicate, lest this should fail,

And speak your fullest on the other side.

Secretary. I noticed he was busily repairing 380

My half-effacement of his Duomo sketch,

And, while he spoke of Florence, turned to it,

As the Mage Negro king to Christ the babe.

LURIA

ACT I

I judge his childishness the mere relapse
To boyhood of a man who has worked lately, 385
And presently will work, so, meantime, plays :
Whence, more than ever I believe in him.

Braccio [after a pause]. The sword ! At best,
the soldier, as he says,
In Florence—the black face, the barbarous name,
For Italy to boast her show of the age, 390
Her man of men ! To Florence with each letter !

ACT II

NOON

Domizia. Well, Florence, shall I reach thee,
 pierce thy heart
Thro' all its safeguards? Hate is said to help—
Quicken the eye, invigorate the arm ;
And this my hate, made up of many hates,
Might stand in scorn of visible instrument, 5
And will thee dead : yet do I trust it not.
Nor man's devices nor Heaven's memory
Of wickedness forgot on earth so soon,
But thy own nature,—hell and thee I trust,
To keep thee constant in that wickedness, 10
Where my revenge may meet thee. Turn aside
A single step, for gratitude or shame,—
Grace but this Luria,—this wild mass of rage
I have prepared to launch against thee now,—
With other payment than thy noblest found,— 15
Give his desert for once its due reward,—
And past thee would my sure destruction roll.
But thou, who mad'st our House thy sacrifice,
It cannot be thou wilt except this Moor
From the accustomed fate of zeal and truth : 20
Thou wilt deny his looked-for recompense,
And then—I reach thee. Old and trained, my sire
Could bow down on his quiet broken heart,
Die awe-struck and submissive, when at last
The strange blow came for the expected wreath ; 25
And Porzio passed in blind bewilderment

To exile, never to return,—they say,
Perplexed in his frank simple honest soul,
As if some natural law had changed,—how else
Could Florence, on plain fact pronouncing thus, 30
Judge Porzio's actions worthy such reward?
But Berto, with the ever-passionate pulse,
—Oh that long night, its dreadful hour on hour,
In which no way of getting his fair fame
From their inexplicable charges free, 35
Was found, save pouring forth the impatient blood
To show its colour whether false or no!
My brothers never had a friend like me
Close in their need to watch the time, then speak,
—Burst with a wakening laughter on their dream, 40
Cry, "Florence was all falseness, so, false here!"
And show them what a simple task remained—
To leave dreams, rise, and punish in God's name
The city wedded to the wickedness.
None stood by them as I by Luria stand. 45
So, when the stranger cheated of his due
Turns on thee as his rapid nature bids,
Then, Florence, think, a hireling at thy throat
For the first outrage, think who bore thy last,
Yet mutely in forlorn obedience died! 50
He comes—his friend—black faces in the camp
Where moved those peerless brows and eyes of old.

Enter LURIA and HUSAIN

Domizia. Well, and the movement—is it as you
hope?

'T is Lucca?

Luria. Ah, the Pisan trumpet merely!
Tiburzio's envoy, I must needs receive. 55

Domizia. Whom I withdraw before; tho' if I
lingered
You could not wonder, for my time fleets fast.

The overtaking night brings such reward!
And where will then be room for me? Yet,
praised,

Remember who was first to promise praise, 60
And envy those who also can perform! [*Goes.*

Luria. This trumpet from the Pisans?—

Husain. In the camp;

A very noble presence—Braccio's visage
On Puccio's body—calm and fixed and good;
A man I seem as I had seen before: 65
Most like, it was some statue had the face.

Luria. Admirthim! This will prove the last delay.

Husain. Ay, friend, go on, and die thou going on!
Thou heardst what the grave woman said but now:
To-night rewards thee. That is well to hear; 70
But stop not therefore: hear it, and go on!

Luria. Oh, their reward and triumph and the
rest

They round me in the ears with, all day long?
All that, I never take for earnest, friend!
Well would it suit us,—their triumphal arch 75
Or storied pillar,—thee and me, the Moors!
But gratitude in those Italian eyes—
That, we shall get?

Husain. It is too cold an air.

Our sun rose out of yonder mound of mist:
Where is he now? So, I trust none of them. 80

Luria. Truly?

Husain. I doubt and fear. There stands a wall
'Twixt our expansive and explosive race
And those absorbing, concentrating men.
They use thee.

Luria. And I feel it, Husain! yes,
And care not—yes, an alien force like mine 85
Is only called to play its part outside
Their different nature; where its sole use seems

To fight with and keep off an adverse force,
As alien,—which repelled, mine too withdraws :
Inside, they know not what to do with me. 90
Thus I have told them laughingly and oft,
But long since am prepared to learn the worst.

Husain. What is the worst ?

Luria. I will forestall them, Husain,
Will speak the destiny they dare not speak—
Banish myself before they find the heart. 95
I will be first to say, “The work rewards !
“I know, for all your praise, my use is over,
“So may it prove !—meanwhile ’t is best I go,
“Go carry safe my memories of you all
“To other scenes of action, newer lands.”— 100
Thus leaving them confirmed in their belief
They would not easily have tired of me.
You think this hard to say ?

Husain. Say or not say,
So thou but go, so they but let thee go !
This hating people, that hate each the other, 105
And in one blandness to us Moors unite—
Locked each to each like slippery snakes, I say,
Which still in all their tangles, hissing tongue
And threatening tail, ne’er do each other harm ;
While any creature of a better blood, 110
They seem to fight for, while they circle safe
And never touch it,—pines without a wound,
Withers away beside their eyes and breath.
See thou, if Puccio come not safely out
Of Braccio’s grasp, this Braccio sworn his foe, 115
As Braccio safely from Domizia’s toils
Who hates him most ! But thou, the friend of all,
. . . Come out of them !

Luria. The Pisan trumpet now !

Husain. Breathe free—it is an enemy, no friend !
[Goes.]

Luria. He keeps his instincts, no new culture
mars

120

Their perfect use in him ; just so the brutes
Rest not, are anxious without visible cause,
When change is in the elements at work,
Which man's trained senses fail to apprehend.
But here,—he takes the distant chariot wheel
For thunder, festal flame for lightning's flash,
The finer traits of cultivated life
For treachery and malevolence : I see !

125

Enter TIBURZIO

Luria. Quick, sir, your message ! I but wait
your message

To sound the charge. You bring no overture
For truce ? I would not, for your General's sake,
You spoke of truce : a time to fight is come,
And, whatsoe'er the fight's event, he keeps
His honest soldier's-name to beat me with,
Or leaves me all himself to beat, I trust !

130

135

Tiburzio. I am Tiburzio.

Luria. You ? 'T is—yes . . . Tiburzio !
You were the last to keep the ford i' the valley
From Puccio, when I threw in succours there !
Why, I was on the heights—through the defile
Ten minutes after, when the prey was lost !
You wore an open skull-cap with a twist
Of water-reeds—the plume being hewn away ;
While I drove down my battle from the heights,
I saw with my own eyes !

140

Tiburzio. And you are Luria
Who sent my cohort, that laid down its arms
In error of the battle-signal's sense,
Back safely to me at the critical time—
One of a hundred deeds. I know you. Therefore
To none but you could I . . .

145

Luria. No truce, Tiburzio !

Tiburzio. Luria, you know the peril imminent 150
On Pisa,—that you have us in the toils,
Us her last safeguard, all that intercepts
The rage of her implacablest of foes
From Pisa : if we fall to-day, she falls.
Tho' Lucca will arrive, yet, 't is too late. 155
You have so plainly here the best of it,
That you must feel, brave soldier as you are,
How dangerous we grow in this extreme,
How truly formidable by despair.
Still, probabilities should have their weight : 160
The extreme chance is ours, but, that chance failing,
You win this battle. Wherefore say I this ?
To be well apprehended when I add,
This danger absolutely comes from you.
Were you, who threaten thus, a Florentine . . . 165

Luria. Sir, I am nearer Florence than her sons.
I can, and have perhaps obliged the State,
Nor paid a mere son's duty.

Tiburzio. Even so.
Were you the son of Florence, yet endued
With all your present nobleness of soul, 170
No question, what I must communicate
Would not detach you from her.

Luria. Me, detach ?

Tiburzio. Time urges. You will ruin presently
Pisa, you never knew, for Florence' sake
You think you know. I have from time to time 175
Made prize of certain secret missives sent
From Braccio here, the Commissary, home :
And knowing Florence otherwise, I piece
The entire chain out, from these its scattered links.
Your trial occupies the Signory ; 180
They sit in judgment on your conduct now.
When men at home inquire into the acts

Which in the field e'en foes appreciate . . .
Brief, they are Florentines ! You, saving them,
Seek but the sure destruction saviours find. 185

Luria. Tiburzio !

Tiburzio. All the wonder is of course.
I am not here to teach you, nor direct,
Only to loyally apprise—scarce that.
This is the latest letter, sealed and safe,
As it left here an hour ago. One way 190
Of two thought free to Florence, I command.
The duplicate is on its road ; but this,—
Read it, and then I shall have more to say.

Luria. Florence !

Tiburzio. Now, were yourself a Florentine,
This letter, let it hold the worst it can, 195
Would be no reason you should fall away.
The mother city is the mother still,
And recognition of the children's service
Her own affair ; reward—there 's no reward !
But you are bound by quite another tie. 200
Nor nature shows, nor reason, why at first
A foreigner, born friend to all alike,
Should give himself to any special State
More than another, stand by Florence' side
Rather than Pisa ; 't is as fair a city 205
You war against as that you fight for—famed
As well as she in story, graced no less
With noble heads and patriotic hearts :
Nor to a stranger's eye would either cause,
Stripped of the cumulative loves and hates 210
Which take importance from familiar view,
Stand as the right and sole to be upheld.
Therefore, should the preponderating gift
Of love and trust, Florence was first to throw,
Which made you hers, not Pisa's, void the scale,— 215
Old ties dissolving, things resume their place

And all begins again. Break seal and read !
At least let Pisa offer for you now !
And I, as a good Pisan, shall rejoice—
Though for myself I lose, in gaining you, 220
This last fight and its opportunity ;
The chance it brings of saving Pisa yet,
Or in the turn of battle dying so
That shame should want its extreme bitterness.

Luria. Tiburzio, you that fight for Pisa now 225
As I for Florence . . . say my chance were yours !
You read this letter, and you find . . . no, no !
Too mad !

Tiburzio. I read the letter, find they purpose
When I have crushed their foe, to crush me : well ?

Luria. You, being their captain, what is it you do ? 230

Tiburzio. Why, as it is, all cities are alike ;
As Florence pays you, Pisa will pay me.
I shall be as belied, whate'er the event,
As you, or more : my weak head, they will say,
Prompted this last expedient, my faint heart 235
Entailed on them indelible disgrace,
Both which defects ask proper punishment.
Another tenure of obedience, mine !
You are no son of Pisa's : break and read !

Luria. And act on what I read ? What act
were fit ? 240

If the firm-fixed foundation of my faith
In Florence, who to me stands for mankind,
—If that break up and, disimprisoning
From the abyss . . . Ah friend, it cannot be !
You may be very sage, yet—all the world 245
Having to fail, or your sagacity,
You do not wish to find yourself alone !
What would the world be worth ? Whose love be
sure ?

The world remains : you are deceived !

Tiburzio.

Your hand!

I lead the vanguard.—If you fall, beside, 250
 The better : I am left to speak ! For me,
 This was my duty, nor would I rejoice
 If I could help, it misses its effect ;
 And after all you will look gallantly
 Found dead here with that letter in your breast. 255

Luria. Tiburzio—I would see these people once
 And test them ere I answer finally !
 At your arrival let the trumpet sound :
 If mine return not then the wonted cry
 It means that I believe—am Pisa's !

*Tiburzio.*Well ! [*Goes.* 260*Luria.* My heart will have it he speaks true!

My blood

Beats close to this Tiburzio as a friend.
 If he had stept into my watch-tent, night
 And the wild desert full of foes around,
 I should have broke the bread and given the salt 265
 Secure, and, when my hour of watch was done,
 Taken my turn to sleep between his knees,
 Safe in the untroubled brow and honest cheek.
 Oh world, where all things pass and nought abides,
 Oh life, the long mutation—is it so ? 270
 Is it with life as with the body's change ?
 —Where, e'en tho' better follow, good must pass,
 Nor manhood's strength can mate with boyhood's
 grace,
 Nor age's wisdom, in its turn, find strength,
 But silently the first gift dies away, 275
 And though the new stays, never both at once.
 Life's time of savage instinct o'er with me,
 It fades and dies away, past trusting more,
 As if to punish the ingratitude
 With which I turned to grow in these new lights, 280
 And learned to look with European eyes.

Yet it is better, this cold certain way,
 Where Braccio's brow tells nothing, Puccio's mouth,
 Domizia's eyes reject the searcher : yes !
 For on their calm sagacity I lean, 285
 Their sense of right, deliberate choice of good,
 Sure, as they know my deeds, they deal with me.
 Yes, that is better—that is best of all !
 Such faith stays when mere wild belief would go.
 Yes—when the desert creature's heart, at fault 290
 Amid the scattering tempest's pillared sands,
 Betrays its step into the pathless drift—
 The calm instructed eye of man holds fast
 By the sole bearing of the visible star,
 Sure that when slow the whirling wreck subside, 295
 The boundaries, lost now, shall be found again,—
 The palm-trees and the pyramid over all.
 Yes : I trust Florence : Pisa is deceived.

Enter BRACCIO, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA

Braccio. Noon 's at an end : no Lucca ? You must fight.

Luria. Do you remember ever, gentle friends, 300
 I am no Florentine ?

Domizia. It is yourself
 Who still are forcing us, importunately,
 To bear in mind what else we should forget.

Luria. For loss !—for what I lose in being none !
 No shrewd man, such as you yourselves respect, 305
 But would remind you of the stranger's loss
 In natural friends and advocates at home,
 Hereditary loves, even rivalships
 With precedent for honour and reward.
 Still, there 's a gain, too ! If you take it so, 310
 The stranger's lot has special gain as well.
 Do you forget there was my own far East
 I might have given away myself to, once,

As now to Florence, and for such a gift,
Stood there like a descended deity? 315
There, worship waits us : what is it waits here?

[Shows the letter.

See ! Chance has put into my hand the means
Of knowing what I earn, before I work.
Should I fight better, should I fight the worse,
With payment palpably before me ? See ! 320
Here lies my whole reward ! Best learn it now
Or keep it for the end's entire delight ?

Braccio. If you serve Florence as the vulgar serve,
For swordsman's-pay alone,—break seal and read !
In that case, you will find your full desert. 325

Luria. Give me my one last happy moment,
friends !

You need me now, and all the graciousness
This letter can contain will hardly balance
The after-feeling that you need no more.
This moment . . . oh, the East has use with you ! 330
Its sword still flashes—is not flung aside
With the past praise, in a dark corner yet !
How say you ? 'T is not so with Florentines,
Captains of yours : for them, the ended war
Is but a first step to the peace begun : 335
He who did well in war, just earns the right
To begin doing well in peace, you know :
And certain my precursors,—would not such
Look to themselves in such a chance as mine,
Secure the ground they trod upon, perhaps ? 340
For I have heard, by fits, or seemed to hear,
Of strange mishap, mistake, ingratitude,
Treachery even. Say that one of you
Surmised this letter carried what might turn
To harm hereafter, cause him prejudice : 345
What would he do ?

Domizia [*hastily*]. Thank God and take revenge !

Hurl her own force against the city straight !
And, even at the moment when the foe
Sounded defiance . . .

[TIBURZIO'S trumpet sounds in the distance.]

Luria. Ah, you Florentines !

So would you do ? Wisely for you, no doubt. 350

My simple Moorish instinct bids me clench

The obligation you relieve me from,

Still deeper ! [*To PUCCIO.*] Sound our answer,

I should say,

And thus :—[*tearing the paper.*]—The battle !

That solves every doubt.

ACT III

AFTERNOON

PUCCIO, *as making a report to* JACOPO

Puccio. And here, your captain must report the rest ;

For, as I say, the main engagement over
And Luria's special part in it performed,
How could a subaltern like me expect
Leisure or leave to occupy the field 5
And glean what dropped from his wide harvesting?
I thought, when Lucca at the battle's end
Came up, just as the Pisan centre broke,
That Luria would detach me and prevent
The flying Pisans seeking what they found, 10
Friends in the rear, a point to rally by.
But no, more honourable proved my post !
I had the august captive to escort
Safe to our camp ; some other could pursue,
Fight, and be famous ; gentler chance was mine— 15
Tiburzio's wounded spirit must be soothed !
He 's in the tent there.

Jacopo. Is the substance down ?
I write—"The vanguard beaten and both wings
"In full retreat, Tiburzio prisoner"—
And now,—"That they fell back and formed again 20
"On Lucca's coming." Why then, after all,
'T is half a victory, no conclusive one ?

Puccio. Two operations where a sole had served.

Jacopo. And Luria's fault was—?

Puccio. Oh, for fault—not much !
He led the attack, a thought impetuously, 25
—There 's commonly more prudence ; now, he
seemed

To hurry measures, otherwise well judged.
By over-concentrating strength at first
Against the enemy's van, both wings escaped :
That 's reparable, yet it is a fault. 30

Enter BRACCIO

Jacopo. As good as a full victory to Florence,
With the advantage of a fault beside—
What is it, Puccio?—that by pressing forward
With too impetuous . . .

Braccio. The report anon !
Thanks, sir—you have elsewhere a charge, I know. 35
[PUCCIO goes.]

There 's nothing done but I would do again ;
Yet, Lapo, it may be the past proves nothing,
And Luria has kept faithful to the close.

Jacopo. I was for waiting.

Braccio. Yes : so was not I.
He could not choose but tear that letter—true ! 40
Still, certain of his tones, I mind, and looks :—
You saw, too, with a fresher soul than I.
So, Porzio seemed an injured man, they say !
Well, I have gone upon the broad, sure ground.

Enter LURIA, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA

Luria [to PUCCIO]. Say, at his pleasure I will
see Tiburzio ! 45
All 's at his pleasure.

Domizia [to LURIA]. Were I not forewarned
You would reject, as you do constantly,
Praise,—I might tell you how you have deserved

Of Florence by this last and crowning feat :
But words offend.

Luria. Nay, you may praise me now. 50
I want instruction every hour, I find,
On points where once I saw least need of it ;
And praise, I have been used to slight perhaps,
Seems scarce so easily dispensed with now.
After a battle half one's strength is gone ; 55
The glorious passion in us once appeased,
Our reason's calm cold dreadful voice begins.
All justice, power and beauty scarce appear
Monopolized by Florence, as of late,
To me, the stranger : you, no doubt, may know 60
Why Pisa needs must bear her rival's yoke.
And peradventure I grow nearer you,
For I, too, want to know and be assured.
When a cause ceases to reward itself,
Its friend seeks fresh sustainments ; praise is one, 65
And here stand you—you, lady, praise me well.
But yours—(your pardon)—is unlearned praise.
To the motive, the endeavour, the heart's self,
Your quick sense looks : you crown and call aright
The soul o' the purpose, ere 't is shaped as act, 70
Takes flesh i' the world, and clothes itself a king.
But when the act comes, stands for what 't is worth,
—Here's Puccio, the skilled soldier, he's my judge!
Was all well, Puccio ?

Puccio. All was . . . must be well :
If we beat Lucca presently, as doubtless . . . 75
—No, there's no doubt, we must—all was well done.

Luria. In truth ? Still you are of the trade,
my Puccio !

You have the fellow-craftsman's sympathy.
There 's none cares, like a fellow of the craft,
For the all-unestimated sum of pains 80
That go to a success the world can see :

They praise then, but the best they never know
—While you know! So, if envy mix with it,
Hate even, still the bottom-praise of all,
Whatever be the dregs, that drop 's pure gold! 85
—For nothing 's like it; nothing else records
Those daily, nightly drippings in the dark
Of the heart 's blood, the world lets drop away
For ever—so, pure gold that praise must be!
And I have yours, my soldier! yet the best 90
Is still to come. There 's one looks on apart
Whom all refers to, failure or success;
What 's done might be our best, our utmost work,
And yet inadequate to serve his need.
Here 's Braccio now, for Florence—here 's our
service— 95

Well done for us, seems it well done for him?
His chosen engine, tasked to its full strength
Answers the end? Should he have chosen higher?
Do we help Florence, now our best is wrought?
Braccio. This battle, with the foregone services, 100
Saves Florence.

Luria. Why then, all is very well!
Here am I in the middle of my friends,
Who know me and who love me, one and all.
And yet . . . 't is like . . . this instant while I speak
Is like the turning-moment of a dream 105
When . . . Ah, you are not foreigners like me!
Well then, one always dreams of friends at home;
And always comes, I say, the turning-point
When something changes in the friendly eyes
That love and look on you . . . so slight, so
slight . . . 110
And yet it tells you they are dead and gone,
Or changed and enemies, for all their words,
And all is mockery and a maddening show.
You now, so kind here, all you Florentines,

What is it in your eyes . . . those lips, those brows . . . 115
Nobody spoke it, yet I know it well!

Come now—this battle saves you, all 's at end,
Your use of me is o'er, for good, for ill,—
Come now, what 's done against me, while I speak,
In Florence? Come! I feel it in my blood, 120

My eyes, my hair, a voice is in my ears
That spite of all this smiling and soft speech
You are betraying me. What is it you do?
Have it your way, and think my use is over—
Think you are saved and may throw off the mask— 125

Have it my way, and think more work remains
Which I could do,—so, show you fear me not!
Or prudent be, or daring, as you choose,
But tell me—tell what I refused to know
At noon, lest heart should fail me! Well? That
letter? 130

My fate is sealed at Florence! What is it?

Braccio. Sir, I shall not deny what you divine.
It is no novelty for innocence
To be suspected, but a privilege :
The after certain compensation comes. 135
Charges, I say not whether false or true,
Have been preferred against you some time since,
Which Florence was bound, plainly, to receive,
And which are therefore undergoing now
The due investigation. That is all. 140
I doubt not but your innocence will prove
Apparent and illustrious, as to me,
To them this evening, when the trial ends.

Luria. My trial?

Domizia. Florence, Florence to the end,
My whole heart thanks thee!

Puccio [to BRACCIO]. What is "trial," sir? 145
It was not for a trial—surely, no—
I furnished you those notes from time to time?

I held myself aggrieved—I am a man—
And I might speak,—ay, and speak mere truth, too,
And yet not mean at bottom of my heart 150
What should assist a—trial, do you say?
You should have told me!

Domizia. Nay, go on, go on!
His sentence! Do they sentence him? What is it?
The block—wheel?

Braccio. Sentence there is none as yet,
Nor shall I give my own opinion now 155
Of what it should be, or is like to be.
When it is passed, applaud or disapprove!
Up to that point, what is there to impugn?

Luria. They are right, then, to try me?

Braccio. I assert,
Maintain and justify the absolute right 160
Of Florence to do all she can have done
In this procedure,—standing on her guard,
Receiving even services like yours
With utmost fit suspicious wariness.
In other matters, keep the mummery up! 165
Take all the experiences of all the world,
Each knowledge that broke through a heart to life,
Each reasoning which, to reach, burnt out a brain,
—In other cases, know these, warrant these,
And then dispense with these—'t is very well! 170
Let friend trust friend, and love demand love's like,
And gratitude be claimed for benefits,—
There 's grace in that,—and when the fresh heart
breaks,

The new brain proves a ruin, what of them?
Where is the matter of one moth the more 175
Singed in the candle, at a summer's end?
But Florence is no simple John or James
To have his toy, his fancy, his conceit
That he 's the one excepted man by fate,

And, when fate shows him he 's mistaken there, 180
Die with all good men's praise, and yield his place
To Paul and George intent to try their chance !
Florence exists because these pass away.

She 's a contrivance to supply a type
Of man, which men's deficiencies refuse ; 185
She binds so many, that she grows out of them—
Stands steady o'er their numbers, though they
change

And pass away—there 's always what upholds,
Always enough to fashion the great show.
As see, yon hanging city, in the sun, 190
Of shapely cloud substantially the same !
A thousand vapours rise and sink again,
Are interfused, and live their life and die,—
Yet ever hangs the steady show i' the air,
Under the sun's straight influence : that is well, 195
That is worth heaven should hold, and God should
bless !

And so is Florence,—the unseen sun above,
Which draws and holds suspended all of us,
Binds transient vapours into a single cloud
Differing from each and better than they all. 200
And shall she dare to stake this permanence
On any one man's faith ? Man's heart is weak,
And its temptations many : let her prove
Each servant to the very uttermost
Before she grant him her reward, I say ! 205

Domizia. And as for hearts she chances to
mistake,

Wronged hearts, not destined to receive reward,
Though they deserve it, did she only know,
—What should she do for these ?

Braccio. What does she not ?

Say, that she gives them but herself to serve ! 210
Here 's Luria—what had profited his strength,

When half an hour of sober fancying
Had shown him step by step the uselessness
Of strength exerted for strength's proper sake?
But the truth is, she did create that strength, 215
Draw to the end the corresponding means.
The world is wide—are we the only men?
Oh, for the time, the social purpose' sake,
Use words agreed on, bandy epithets,
Call any man the sole great wise and good ! 220
But shall we therefore, standing by ourselves,
Insult our souls and God with the same speech?
There, swarm the ignoble thousands under him :
What marks us from the hundreds and the tens?
Florence took up, turned all one way the soul 225
Of Luria with its fires, and here he glows !
She takes me out of all the world as him,
Fixing my coldness till like ice it checks
The fire ! So, Braccio, Luria, which is best ?,
 Luria. Ah, brave me ? And is this indeed the
 way 230
To gain your good word and sincere esteem ?
Am I the baited animal that must turn
And fight his baiters to deserve their praise ?
Obedience is mistake then ? Be it so !
Do you indeed remember I stand here 235
The captain of the conquering army,—mine—
With all your tokens, praise and promise, ready
To show for what their names meant when you
 gave,
Not what you style them now you take away ?
If I call in my troops to arbitrate, 240
And dash the first enthusiastic thrill
Of victory with this you menace now—
Commend to the instinctive popular sense,
My story first, your comment afterward,—
Will they take, think you, part with you or me ? 245

If I say—I, the labourer they saw work,
Ending my work, ask pay, and find my lords
Have all this while provided silently
Against the day of pay and proving faith,
By what you call my sentence that 's to come— 250
Will friends advise I wait complacently?
If I meet Florence half way at their head,
What will you do, my mild antagonist?

Braccio. I will rise up like fire, proud and
triumphant

That Florence knew you thoroughly and by me, 255
And so was saved. "See, Italy," I 'll say,
"The crown of our precautions! Here 's a man
"Was far advanced, just touched on the belief
"Less subtle cities had accorded long;
"But we were wiser : at the end comes this ! " 260
And from that minute, where is Luria? Lost!
The very stones of Florence cry against
The all-exacting, nought-enduring fool
Who thus resents her first probation, flouts
As if he, only, shone and cast no shade, 265
He, only, walked the earth with privilege
Against suspicion, free where angels fear :
He, for the first inquisitive mother's-word,
Must turn, and stand on his defence, forsooth!
Reward? You will not be worth punishment! 270

Luria. And Florence knew me thus! Thus I
have lived,—

And thus you, with the clear fine intellect,
Braccio, the cold acute instructed mind,
Out of the stir, so calm and unconfused,
Reported me—how could you otherwise! 275
Ay?—and what dropped from you, just now,
moreover?

Your information, Puccio?—Did your skill,
Your understanding sympathy approve

Such a report of me? Was this the end?
Or is even this the end? Can I stop here? 280
You, lady, with the woman's stand apart,
The heart to see with, past man's brain and eyes,
. . . I cannot fathom why you should destroy
The unoffending one, you call your friend—
Still, lessoned by the good examples here 285
Of friendship, 't is but natural I ask—
Had you a further aim, in aught you urged,
Than your friend's profit—in all those instances
Of perfidy, all Florence wrought of wrong—
All I remember now for the first time? 290

Domizia. I am a daughter of the Traversari,
Sister of Porzio and of Berto both,
So, have foreseen all that has come to pass.
I knew the Florence that could doubt their faith,
Must needs mistrust a stranger's—dealing them 295
Punishment, would deny him his reward.
And I believed, the shame they bore and died,
He would not bear, but live and fight against—
Seeing he was of other stuff than they.

Luria. Hear them! All these against one
foreigner! 300
And all this while, where is, in the whole world,
To his good faith a single witness?

Tiburzio [*who has entered unseen during the preceding dialogue*]. Here!

Thus I bear witness, not in word but deed.
I live for Pisa; she's not lost to-day
By many chances—much prevents from that! 305
Her army has been beaten, I am here,
But Lucca comes at last, one happy chance!
I rather would see Pisa three times lost
Than saved by any traitor, even by you;
The example of a traitor's happy fortune 310
Would bring more evil in the end than good;—

Pisa rejects the traitor, craves yourself !
 I, in her name, resign forthwith to you
 My charge,—the highest office, sword and shield !
 You shall not, by my counsel, turn on Florence 315
 Your army, give her calumny that ground—
 Nor bring one soldier : be you all we gain !
 And all she 'll lose,—a head to deck some bridge,
 And save the cost o' the crown should deck the
 head.

Leave her to perish in her perfidy, 320
 Plague-stricken and stripped naked to all eyes,
 A proverb and by-word in all mouths !
 Go you to Pisa ! Florence is my place—
 Leave me to tell her of the rectitude,
 I, from the first, told Pisa, knowing it. 325
 To Pisa !

Domizia. Ah my Braccio, are you caught ?

Braccio. Puccio, good soldier and good citizen,
 Whom I have ever kept beneath my eye,
 Ready as fit, to serve in this event
 Florence, who clear foretold it from the first— 330
 Through me, she gives you the command and charge
 She takes, through me, from him who held it late !
 A painful trial, very sore, was yours :
 All that could draw out, marshal in array
 The selfish passions 'gainst the public good— 335
 Sights, scorns, neglects, were heaped on you to bear :
 And ever you did bear and bow the head !
 It had been sorry trial, to precede
 Your feet, hold up the promise of reward
 For luring gleam ; your footsteps kept the track 340
 Thro' dark and doubt : take all the light at once !
 Trial is over, consummation shines ;
 Well have you served, as well henceforth command !

Puccio. No, no . . . I dare not ! I am grateful,
 glad ;

But Luria—you shall understand he 's wronged : 345
And he 's my captain : this is not the way
We soldiers climb to fortune : think again !
The sentence is not even passed, beside !
I dare not : where 's the soldier could ?

Luria. Now, Florence—
Is it to be ? You will know all the strength 350
O' the savage—to your neck the proof must go ?
You will prove the brute nature ? Ah, I see !
The savage plainly is impassible :
He keeps his calm way through insulting words,
Sarcastic looks, sharp gestures—one of which 355
Would stop you, fatal to your finer sense,
But if he stolidly advance, march mute
Without a mark upon his callous hide,
Through the mere brushwood you grow angry with,
And leave the tatters of your flesh upon, 360
—You have to learn that when the true bar comes,
The murk mid-forest, the grand obstacle,
Which when you reach, you give the labour up,
Nor dash on, but lie down composed before,
—He goes against it, like the brute he is : 365
It falls before him, or he dies in his course.
I kept my course through past ingratitude :
I saw—it does seem, now, as if I saw,
Could not but see, those insults as they fell,
—Ay, let them glance from off me, very like, 370
Laughing, perhaps, to think the quality
You grew so bold on, while you so despised
The Moor's dull mute inapprehensive mood,
Was saving you : I bore and kept my course.
Now real wrong fronts me : see if I succumb ! 375
Florence withstands me ? I will punish her.

At night my sentence will arrive, you say.
Till then I cannot, if I would, rebel

—Unauthorized to lay my office down,
Retaining my full power to will and do : 380
After—it is to see. Tiburzio, thanks !
Go ; you are free : join Lucca ! I suspend
All further operations till to-night.
Thank you, and for the silence most of all !
[To BRACCIO.] Let my complacent bland accuser go 385
Carry his self-approving head and heart
Safe through the army which would trample him
Dead in a moment at my word or sign !
Go, sir, to Florence ; tell friends what I say—
That while I wait my sentence, theirs waits them ! 390
[To DOMIZIA.] You, lady,—you have black Italian
eyes !
I would be generous if I might : oh, yes—
For I remember how so oft you seemed
Inclined at heart to break the barrier down
Which Florence finds God built between us both. 395
Alas, for generosity ! this hour
Asks retribution : bear it as you may,
I must—the Moor—the savage,—pardon you !
Puccio, my trusty soldier, see them forth !

ACT IV

EVENING

Enter PUCCIO and JACOPO

Puccio. What Luria will do? Ah, 't is yours,
fair sir,

and your subtle-witted master's part,
tell me that; I tell you what he can.

Jacopo. Friend, you mistake my station: I observe

game, watch how my betters play, no more. 5

Puccio. But mankind are not pieces—there 's
your fault!

cannot push them, and, the first move made,
back and study what the next shall be,

confidence that, when 't is fixed upon,
find just where you left them, blacks and
whites: 10

go on moving when your hand 's away.

build, I notice, firm on Luria's faith
whole time,—firmlier than I choose to build,
never doubted it—of old, that is—

Luria in his ordinary mind. 15

now, oppression makes the wise man mad:

do I know he will not turn and stand
hold his own against you, as he may?
ose he but withdraw to Pisa—well,—
, even if all happen to your wish, 20
h is a chance . . .

Jacopo. Nay—'t was an oversight,

Not waiting till the proper warrant came :
You could not take what was not ours to give.
But when at night the sentence really comes,
Our city authorizes past dispute 25
Luria's removal and transfers the charge,
You will perceive your duty and accept ?

Puccio. Accept what ? muster-rolls of soldiers' names ?

An army upon paper ? I want men,
The hearts as well as hands—and where 's a heart 30
But beats with Luria, in the multitude
I come from walking through by Luria's side ?
You gave them Luria, set him thus to grow,
Head-like, upon their trunk ; one heart feeds both,
They feel him there, live twice, and well know why. 35
—For they do know, if you are ignorant,
Who kept his own place and respected theirs,
Managed their sweat, yet never spared his blood.
All was your act : another might have served—
There 's peradventure no such dearth of heads— 40
But you chose Luria : so, they grew one flesh,
And now, for nothing they can understand,
Luria removed, off is to roll the head ;
The body 's mine—much I shall do with it !

Jacopo. That 's at the worst.

Puccio. No—at the best, it is ! 45

Best, do you hear ? I saw them by his side.
Only we two with Luria in the camp
Are left that keep the secret ? You think that ?
Hear what I know : from rear to van, no heart
But felt the quiet patient hero there 50
Was wronged, nor in the moveless ranks an eye
But glancing told its fellow the whole story
Of that convicted silent knot of spies
Who passed thro' them to Florence ; they might
pass—

No breast but gladlier beat when free of such ! 55
Our troops will catch up Luria, close him round,
Bear him to Florence as their natural lord,
Partake his fortune, live or die with him.

Jacopo. And by mistake catch up along with
him

Puccio, no doubt, compelled in self despite 60
To still continue second in command !

Puccio. No, sir, no second nor so fortunate !
Your tricks succeed with me too well for that !
I am as you have made me, live and die
To serve your end—a mere trained fighting-hack, 65
With words, you laugh at while they leave your
mouth

For my life's rule and ordinance of God !
I have to do my duty, keep my faith,
And earn my praise, and guard against my blame,
As I was trained. I shall accept your charge, 70
And fight against one better than myself,
Spite of my heart's conviction of his worth—
That, you may count on !—just as hitherto
I have gone on, persuaded I was wronged,
Slighted, insulted, terms we learn by rote,— 75
All because Luria superseded me—
Because the better nature, fresh-inspired,
Mounted above me to its proper place !
What mattered all the kindly graciousness,
The cordial brother's-bearing ? This was clear— 80
I, once the captain, now was subaltern,
And so must keep complaining like a fool !
Go, take the curse of a lost soul, I say !
You neither play your puppets to the end,
Nor treat the real man,—for his realness' sake 85
Thrust rudely in their place,—with such regard
As might console them for their altered rank.
Me, the mere steady soldier, you depose

For Luria, and here's all your pet deserves!
Of what account, then, is your laughing-stock? 90
One word for all: whatever Luria does,
—If backed by his indignant troops he turn,
Revenge himself, and Florence go to ground,—
Or, for a signal everlasting shame,
He pardon you, simply seek better friends, 95
Side with the Pisans and Lucchese for change
—And if I, pledged to ingrates past belief,
Dare fight against a man such fools call false,
Who, inasmuch as he was true, fights me,—
Whichever way he win, he wins for worth, 100
For every soldier, for all true and good!
Sir, chronicling the rest, omit not this!

As they go, enter LURIA and HUSAIN

Husain. Saw'st thou?—For they are gone!

The world lies bare
Before thee, to be tasted, felt and seen
Like what it is, now Florence goes away! 105
Thou livest now, with men art man again!
Those Florentines were all to thee of old;
But Braccio, but Domizia, gone is each,
There lie beneath thee thine own multitudes!
Saw'st thou?

Luria. I saw.

Husain. Then, hold thy course, my king! 110
The years return. Let thy heart have its way:
Ah, they would play with thee as with all else,
Turn thee to use, and fashion thee anew,
Find out God's fault in thee as in the rest?
Oh watch, oh listen only to these fiends 115
Once at their occupation! Ere we know,
The free great heaven is shut, their stifling pall
Drops till it frets the very tingling hair,
So weighs it on our head,—and, for the earth,

Our common earth is tethered up and down, 120
Over and across—"here shalt thou move," they
cry!

Luria. Ay, Husain?

Husain. So have they spoiled all beside!
So stands a man girt round with Florentines,
Priests, greybeards, Braccios, women, boys and
spies,

All in one tale, all singing the same song, 125
How thou must house, and live at bed and board,
Take pledge and give it, go their every way,
Breathe to their measure, make thy blood beat
time

With theirs—or, all is nothing—thou art lost—
A savage, how shouldst thou perceive as they? 130
Feel glad to stand 'neath God's close naked hand!
Look up to it! Why, down they pull thy neck,
Lest it crush thee, who feel'st it and wouldst
kiss,

Without their priests that needs must glove it
first,

Lest peradventure flesh offend thy lip. 135

Love woman! Why, a very beast thou art!

Thou must . . .

Luria. Peace, Husain!

Husain. Ay but, spoiling all,
For all, else true things, substituting false,
That they should dare spoil, of all instincts, thine!
Should dare to take thee with thine instincts up, 140
Thy battle-ardours, like a ball of fire,
And class them and allow them place and play
So far, no farther—unabashed the while!
Thou with the soul that never can take rest—
Thou born to do, undo, and do again, 145
And never to be still,—wouldst thou make war?
Oh, that is commendable, just and right!

"Come over," say they, "have the honour due
 "In living out thy nature! Fight thy best :
 "It is to be for Florence, not thyself! 150
 "For thee, it were a horror and a plague ;
 "For us, when war is made for Florence, see,
 "How all is changed : the fire that fed on earth
 "Now towers to heaven!"—

Luria. And what sealed up so long
 My Husain's mouth?

Husain. Oh friend, oh lord—for me, 155
 What am I?—I was silent at thy side,
 Who am a part of thee. It is thy hand,
 Thy foot that glows when in the heart fresh blood
 Boils up, thou heart of me! Now, live again,
 Again love as thou likest, hate as free! 160
 Turn to no Braccios nor Domizias now,
 To ask, before thy very limbs dare move,
 If Florence' welfare be concerned thereby!

Luria. So clear what Florence must expect of
 me?

Husain. Both armies against Florence! Take
 revenge! 165

Wide, deep—to live upon, in feeling now,—
 And, after live, in memory, year by year—
 And, with the dear conviction, die at last!
 She lies now at thy pleasure : pleasure have!
 Their vaunted intellect that gilds our sense, 170
 And blends with life, to show it better by,
 —How think'st thou?—I have turned that light
 on them!

They called our thirst of war a transient thing ;
 "The battle-element must pass away
 "From life," they said, "and leave a tranquil
 world." 175

—Master, I took their light and turned it full
 On that dull turgid vein they said would burst

And pass away ; and as I looked on life,
Still everywhere I tracked this, though it hid
And shifted, lay so silent as it thought, 180
Changed shape and hue yet ever was the same.
Why, 't was all fighting, all their nobler life !
All work was fighting, every harm—defeat,
And every joy obtained—a victory !
Be not their dupe !

—Their dupe ? That hour is past ! 185
Here stand'st thou in the glory and the calm :
All is determined. Silence for me now !

[HUSAIN goes.]

Luria. Have I heard all ?

Domizia [*advancing from the background*]. No,
Luria, I remain !

Not from the motives these have urged on thee,
Ignoble, insufficient, incomplete, 190
And pregnant each with sure seeds of decay,
As failing of sustainment from thyself,
—Neither from low revenge, nor selfishness,
Nor savage lust of power, nor one, nor all,
Shalt thou abolish Florence ! I proclaim 195
The angel in thee, and reject the sprites
Which ineffectual crowd about his strength,
And mingle with his work and claim a share !
Inconsciously to the augustest end
Thou hast arisen : second not in rank 200
So much as time, to him who first ordained
That Florence, thou art to destroy, should be.
Yet him a star, too, guided, who broke first
The pride of lonely power, the life apart,
And made the eminences, each to each, 205
Lean o'er the level world and let it lie
Safe from the thunder henceforth 'neath their
tops ;

So the few famous men of old combined,

And let the multitude rise underneath,
And reach them and unite—so Florence grew : 210
Braccio speaks true, it was well worth the price.
But when the sheltered many grew in pride
And grudged the station of the elected ones,
Who, greater than their kind, are truly great
Only in voluntary servitude— 215
Time was for thee to rise, and thou art here.
Such plague possessed this Florence : who can
tell

The mighty girth and greatness at the heart
Of those so perfect pillars of the grove
She pulled down in her envy? Who as I, 220
The light weak parasite born but to twine
Round each of them and, measuring them, live?
My light love keeps the matchless circle safe,
My slender life proves what has passed away.
I lived when they departed ; lived to cling 225
To thee, the mighty stranger ; thou wouldst rise
And burst the thralldom, and avenge, I knew.
I have done nothing ; all was thy strong bole.
But a bird's weight can break the infant tree
Which after holds an aery in its arms, 230
And 't was my care that nought should warp thy
spire

From rising to the height ; the roof is reached
O' the forest, break through, see extend the sky !
Go on to Florence, Luria ! 'T is man's cause !
Fail thou, and thine own fall were least to dread : 235
Thou keepest Florence in her evil way,
Encouragest her sin so much the more—
And while the ignoble past is justified,
Thou all the surelier warp'st the future growth,
The chiefs to come, the Lurias yet unborn, 240
That, greater than thyself, are reached o'er thee
Who giv'st the vantage-ground their foes require

As o'er my prostrate House thyself wast reached.
Man calls thee, God requites thee! All is said,
The mission of my House fulfilled at last : 245
And the mere woman, speaking for herself,
Reserves speech—it is now no woman's time.

[DOMIZIA goes.]

Luria. Thus at the last must figure Luria, then!
Doing the various work of all his friends,
And answering every purpose save his own. 250
No doubt, 't is well for them to wish ; but him—
After the exploit what were left? Perchance
A little pride upon the swarthy brow
At having brought successfully to bear
'Gainst Florence' self her own especial arms,— 255
Her craftiness, impelled by fiercer strength
From Moorish blood than feeds the northern wit—
But after!—once the easy vengeance willed,
Beautiful Florence at a word laid low
—(Not in her domes and towers and palaces, 260
Not even in a dream, that outrage!)—low,
As shamed in her own eyes henceforth for ever,
Low, for the rival cities round to laugh,
Conquered and pardoned by a hireling Moor!
—For him, who did the irreparable wrong, 265
What would be left, his life's illusion fled,—
What hope or trust in the forlorn wide world?
How strange that Florence should mistake me
so!

Whence grew this? What withdrew her faith
from me?

Some cause! These fretful-blooded children talk 270
Against their mother,—they are wronged, they
say—

Notable wrongs her smile makes up again!
So, taking fire at each supposed offence,
They may speak rashly, suffer for their speech :

But what could it have been in word or deed 275
Thus injured me? Some one word spoken more
Out of my heart, and all had changed perhaps.
My fault, it must have been,—for, what gain they?
Why risk the danger? See, what I could do!
And my fault, wherefore visit upon them, 280
My Florentines? The notable revenge
I meditated! To stay passively,
Attend their summons, be as they dispose!
Why, if my very soldiers keep the rank,
And if my chieftains acquiesce, what then? 285
I ruin Florence, teach her friends mistrust,
Confirm her enemies in harsh belief,
And when she finds one day, as find she must,
The strange mistake, and how my heart was hers,
Shall it console me, that my Florentines 290
Walk with a sadder step, in graver guise,
Who took me with such frankness, praised me so,
At the glad outset? Had they loved me less,
They had less feared what seemed a change in me.
And after all, who did the harm? Not they! 295
How could they interpose with those old fools
I' the council? Suffer for those old fools' sake—
They, who made pictures of me, sang the songs
About my battles? Ah, we Moors get blind
Out of our proper world, where we can see! 300
The sun that guides is closer to us! There—
There, my own orb! He sinks from out the sky.
Why, there! a whole day has he blessed the land,
My land, our Florence all about the hills,
The fields and gardens, vineyards, olive-grounds, 305
All have been blest: and yet we Florentines
With souls intent upon our battle here,
Found that he rose too soon, or set too late,
Gave us no vantage, or gave Pisa much—
Therefore we wronged him! Does he turn in ire 310

To burn the earth that cannot understand ?
Or drop out quietly, and leave the sky,
His task once ended ? Night wipes blame away.
Another morning from my East shall spring
And find all eyes at leisure, all disposed 315
To watch and understand its work, no doubt.
So, praise the new sun, the successor praise,
Praise the new Luria and forget the old !

[Taking a phial from his breast.]

Strange ! This is all I brought from my own land
To help me : Europe would supply the rest, 320
All needs beside, all other helps save one !
I thought of adverse fortune, battle lost,
The natural upbraiding of the loser,
And then this quiet remedy to seek
At end of the disastrous day. *[He drinks.]*

'T is sought ! 325

This was my happy triumph-morning : Florence
Is saved : I drink this, and ere night,—die !
Strange !

ACT V

NIGHT

LURIA *and* PUCCIO

Luria. I thought to do this, not to talk this :
well,

Such were my projects for the city's good,
To help her in attack or by defence.
Time, here as elsewhere, soon or late may take
Our foresight by surprise thro' chance and change; 5
But not a little we provide against
—If you see clear on every point.

Puccio. Most clear.

Luria. Then all is said—not much, if you count
words,

Yet to an understanding ear enough ;
And all that my brief stay permits, beside. 10
Nor must you blame me, as I sought to teach
My elder in command, or threw a doubt
Upon the very skill, it comforts me
To know I leave,—your steady soldiership
Which never failed me : yet, because it seemed 15
A stranger's eye might haply note defect
That skill, through use and custom, overlooks—
I have gone into the old cares once more,
As if I had to come and save again
Florence—that May—that morning ! 'T is night
now. 20

Well—I broke off with ? . . .

Puccio. Of the past campaign

You spoke—of measures to be kept in mind
For future use.

Luria. True, so . . . but, time—no time!
As well end here : remember this, and me !
Farewell now !

Puccio. Dare I speak ?

Luria. South o' the river— 25
How is the second stream called . . . no,—the
third ?

Puccio. Pesa.

Luria. And a stone's cast from the fording-
place,
To the east,—the little mount's name ?

Puccio. Lupo.

Luria. Ay !
Ay—there the tower, and all that side is safe !

With San Romano, west of Evola, 30
San Miniato, Scala, Empoli,
Five towers in all,—forget not !

Puccio. Fear not me !

Luria. —Nor to memorialize the Council now,
I' the easy hour, on those battalions' claim,
Who forced a pass by Staggia on the hills, 35
And kept the Sienese at check !

Puccio. One word—
Sir, I must speak ! That you submit yourself
To Florence' bidding, howsoe'er it prove,
And give up the command to me—is much,
Too much, perhaps : but what you tell me now, 40
Even will affect the other course you choose—
Poor as it may be, perils even that !

Refuge you seek at Pisa : yet these plans
All militate for Florence, all conclude
Your formidable work to make her queen 45
O' the country,—which her rivals rose against
When you began it,—which to interrupt,

Pisa would buy you off at any price !
 You cannot mean to sue for Pisa's help,
 With this made perfect and on record ?

Luria. I— 50

At Pisa, and for refuge, do you say ?

Puccio. Where are you going, then ? You
 must decide

On leaving us, a silent fugitive,
 Alone, at night—you, stealing through our lines,
 Who were this morning's Luria,—you escape 55
 To painfully begin the world once more,
 With such a past, as it had never been !
 Where are you going ?

Luria. Not so far, my Puccio,
 But that I hope to hear, enjoy and praise
 (If you mind praise from your old captain yet) 60
 Each happy blow you strike for Florence.

Puccio. Ay,—
 But ere you gain your shelter, what may come ?
 For see—though nothing 's surely known as yet,
 Still—truth must out—I apprehend the worst.
 If mere suspicion stood for certainty 65
 Before, there 's nothing can arrest the step
 Of Florence toward your ruin, once on foot.
 Forgive her fifty times, it matters not !
 And having disbelieved your innocence,
 How can she trust your magnanimity ? 70
 You may do harm to her—why then, you will !
 And Florence is sagacious in pursuit.
 Have you a friend to count on ?

Luria. One sure friend.

Puccio. Potent ?

Luria. All-potent.

Puccio. And he is apprised ?

Luria. He waits me.

Puccio. So !—Then I, put in your place, 75

Making my profit of all done by you,
Calling your labours mine, reaping their fruit,
To this, the State's gift, now add yours beside—
That I may take as my peculiar store
These your instructions to work Florence good. 80
And if, by putting some few happily
In practice, I should both advantage her
And draw down honour on myself,—what then?

Luria. Do it, my Puccio! I shall know and
praise.

Puccio. Though so, men say, “mark what we
gain by change 85
“—A Puccio for a Luria!”

Luria. Even so.

Puccio. Then, not for fifty hundred Florences,
Would I accept one office save my own,
Fill any other than my rightful post
Here at your feet, my captain and my lord! 90
That such a cloud should break, such trouble be,
Ere a man settle, soul and body, down
Into his true place and take rest for ever!
Here were my wise eyes fixed on your right-hand,
And so the bad thoughts came and the worse words, 95
And all went wrong and painfully enough,—
No wonder,—till, the right spot stumbled on,
All the jar stops, and there is peace at once!
I am yours now,—a tool your right-hand wields!
God's love, that I should live, the man I am, 100
On orders, warrants, patents, and the like,
As if there were no glowing eye i' the world
To glance straight inspiration to my brain,
No glorious heart to give mine twice the beats!
For, see—my doubt, where is it?—fear? 't is flown! 105
And Florence and her anger are a tale
To scare a child. Why, half-a-dozen words
Will tell her, spoken as I now can speak,

Her error, my past folly—and all 's right,
 And you are Luria, our great chief again! 110
 Or at the worst—which worst were best of all—
 To exile or to death I follow you.

Luria. Thanks, Puccio! Let me use the privilege
 You grant me : if I still command you,—stay!
 Remain here—my vicegerent, it shall be, 115
 And not successor : let me, as of old,
 Still serve the State, my spirit prompting yours—
 Still triumph, one for both. There! Leave me now!
 You cannot disobey my first command?
 Remember what I spoke of Jacopo, 120
 And what you promised to concert with him!
 Send him to speak with me—nay, no farewell!
 You shall be by me when the sentence comes.

[PUCCIO goes.]

So, there 's one Florentine returns again!
 Out of the genial morning-company 125
 One face is left to take into the night.

Enter JACOPO

Jacopo. I wait for your command, sir.

Luria. What, so soon?
 I thank your ready presence and fair word.
 I used to notice you in early days
 As of the other species, so to speak, 130
 Those watchers of the lives of us who act—
 That weigh our motives, scrutinize our thoughts.
 So, I propound this to your faculty
 As you would tell me, were a town to take
 . . . That is, of old. I am departing hence 135
 Under these imputations ; that is nought—
 I leave no friend on whom they may rebound,
 Hardly a name behind me in the land,
 Being a stranger : all the more behoves
 That I regard how altered were the case 140

With natives of the country, Florentines
On whom the like mischance should fall: the roots
O' the tree survive the ruin of the trunk—
No root of mine will throb, you understand.
But I had predecessors, Florentines, 145
Accused as I am now, and punished so—
The Traversari: you know more than I
How stigmatized they are, and lost in shame.
Now Puccio, who succeeds me in command,
Both served them and succeeded, in due time; 150
He knows the way, holds proper documents,
And has the power to lay the simple truth
Before an active spirit, as I count yours:
And also there 's Tiburzio, my new friend,
Will, at a word, confirm such evidence, 155
He being the great chivalric soul we know.
I put it to your tact, sir—were 't not well,
—A grace, though but for contrast's sake, no more,—
If you who witness, and have borne a share
Involuntarily in my mischance, 160
Should, of your proper motion, set your skill
To indicate—that is, investigate
The right or wrong of what mischance befell
Those famous citizens, your countrymen?
Nay, you shall promise nothing: but reflect, 165
And if your sense of justice prompt you—good!
Jacopo. And if, the trial past, their fame stand clear
To all men's eyes, as yours, my lord, to mine—
Their ghosts may sleep in quiet satisfied!
For me, a straw thrown up into the air, 170
My testimony goes for a straw's worth.
I used to hold by the instructed brain,
And move with Braccio as my master-wind;
The heart leads surelier: I must move with you—
As greatest now, who ever were the best. 175
So, let the last and humblest of your servants

Accept your charge, as Braccio's heretofore,
And tender homage by obeying you!

[JACOPO goes.

Luria. Another! Luria goes not poorly forth.
If we could wait! The only fault 's with time; 180
All men become good creatures: but so slow!

Enter DOMIZIA

Luria. Ah, you once more?

Domizia. Domizia, whom you knew,
Performed her task, and died with it. 'T is I,
Another woman, you have never known.
Let the past sleep now!

Luria. I have done with it. 185

Domizia. How inexhaustibly the spirit grows!
One object, she seemed erewhile born to reach
With her whole energies and die content,—
So like a wall at the world's edge it stood,
With nought beyond to live for,—is that reached? 190
Already are new undreamed energies
Outgrowing under, and extending farther
To a new object; there 's another world.
See! I have told the purpose of my life;
'T is gained: you are decided, well or ill— 195
You march on Florence, or submit to her—
My work is done with you, your brow declares.
But—leave you? More of you seems yet to reach:
I stay for what I just begin to see.

Luria. So that you turn not to the past!

Domizia. You trace 200

Nothing but ill in it—my selfish impulse,
Which sought its end and disregarded yours?

Luria. Speak not against your nature: best,
each keep

His own—you, yours—most, now that I keep mine,
—At least, fall by it, having too weakly stood. 205

God's finger marks distinctions, all so fine,
We would confound : the lesser has its use,
Which, when it apes the greater, is forgone.
I, born a Moor, lived half a Florentine ;
But, punished properly, can end, a Moor. 210
Beside, there 's something makes me understand
Your nature : I have seen it.

Domizia. Aught like mine ?

Luria. In my own East . . . if you would
stoop and help
My barbarous illustration ! It sounds ill ;
Yet there 's no wrong at bottom : rather, praise. 215

Domizia. Well ?

Luria. We have creatures there, which if
you saw
The first time, you would doubtless marvel at
For their surpassing beauty, craft and strength.
And though it were a lively moment's shock
When you first found the purpose of forked tongues 220
That seem innocuous in their lambent play,
Yet, once made know such grace requires such
guard,

Your reason soon would acquiesce, I think,
In wisdom which made all things for the best—
So, take them, good with ill, contentedly, 225
The prominent beauty with the latent sting.
I am glad to have seen you wondrous Florentines :
Yet . . .

Domizia. I am here to listen.

Luria. My own East !
How nearer God we were ! He glows above
With scarce an intervention, presses close 230
And palpitatingly, his soul o'er ours :
We feel him, nor by painful reason know !
The everlasting minute of creation
Is felt there ; now it is, as it was then ;

All changes at his instantaneous will, 235
 Not by the operation of a law
 Whose maker is elsewhere at other work.
 His hand is still engaged upon his world—
 Man's praise can forward it, man's prayer suspend,
 For is not God all-mighty? To recast 240
 The world, erase old things and make them new,
 What costs it Him? So, man breathes nobly there.
 And inasmuch as feeling, the East's gift,
 Is quick and transient—comes, and lo, is gone—
 While Northern thought is slow and durable, 245
 Surely a mission was reserved for me,
 Who, born with a perception of the power
 And use of the North's thought for us of the East,
 Should have remained, turned knowledge to ac-
 count,
 Giving thought's character and permanence 250
 To the too transitory feeling there—
 Writing God's message plain in mortal words.
 Instead of which, I leave my fated field
 For this where such a task is needed least,
 Where all are born consummate in the art 255
 I just perceive a chance of making mine,—
 And then, deserting thus my early post,
 I wonder that the men I come among
 Mistake me! There, how all had understood,
 Still brought fresh stuff for me to stamp and keep, 260
 Fresh instinct to translate them into law!
 Me, who . . .

Domizia. Who here the greater task achieve,
 More needful even : who have brought fresh stuff
 For us to mould, interpret and prove right,—
 New feeling fresh from God, which, could we
 know

O' the instant, where had been our need of it?
 —Whose life re-teaches us what life should be,

What faith is, loyalty and simpleness,
 All, once revealed but taught us so long since
 That, having mere tradition of the fact,— 270
 Truth copied falteringly from copies faint,
 The early traits all dropped away,—we said
 On sight of faith like yours, “So looks not faith
 “We understand, described and praised before.”
 But still, the feat was dared; and though at first 275
 It suffered from our haste, yet trace by trace
 Old memories reappear, old truth returns,
 Our slow thought does its work, and all’s re-known.
 Oh noble Luria! What you have decreed
 I see not, but no animal revenge, 280
 No brute-like punishment of bad by worse—
 It cannot be, the gross and vulgar way
 Traced for me by convention and mistake,
 Has gained that calm approving eye and brow!
 Spare Florence, after all! Let Luria trust 285
 To his own soul, he whom I trust with mine!

Luria. In time!

Domizia. How, Luria?

Luria. It is midnight now,
 And they arrive from Florence with my fate.

Domizia. I hear no step.

Luria. I feel one, as you say.

Enter HUSAIN

Husain. The man returned from Florence!

Luria. As I knew. 290

Husain. He seeks thee.

Luria. And I only wait for him.

Aught else?

Husain. A movement of the Lucchese troops
 Southward—

Luria. Toward Florence? Have out in-
 stantly . . .

Ah, old use clings ! Puccio must care henceforth.
In—quick—'t is nearly midnight ! Bid him come ! 295

Enter TIBURZIO, BRACCIO, *and* PUCCIO

Tiburzio ?—not at Pisa ?

Tiburzio.

I return

From Florence : I serve Pisa, and must think

By such procedure I have served her best.

A people is but the attempt of many

To rise to the completer life of one ;

300

And those who live as models for the mass

Are singly of more value than they all.

Such man are you, and such a time is this,

That your sole fate concerns a nation more

Than much apparent welfare : that to prove

305

Your rectitude, and duly crown the same,

Imports us far beyond to-day's event,

A battle's loss or gain : man's mass remains,—

Keep but God's model safe, new men will rise

To take its mould, and other days to prove

310

How great a good was Luria's glory. True—

I might go try my fortune as you urged,

And, joining Lucca, helped by your disgrace,

Repair our harm—so were to-day's work done ;

But where leave Luria for our sons to see ?

315

No, I look farther. I have testified

(Declaring my submission to your arms)

Her full success to Florence, making clear

Your probity, as none else could : I spoke,

And out it shone !

Luria.

Ah—until Braccio spoke !

320

Braccio. Till Braccio told in just a word the
whole—

His lapse to error, his return to knowledge :

Which told . . . Nay, Luria, I should droop the
head,

I whom shame rests with ! Yet I dare look up,
Sure of your pardon now I sue for it, 325
Knowing you wholly. Let the midnight end !
'T is morn approaches ! Still you answer not ?
Sunshine succeeds the shadow past away ;
Our faces, which phantasmal grew and false,
Are all that felt it : they change round you, turn 330
Truly themselves now in its vanishing.
Speak, Luria ! Here begins your true career :
Look up, advance ! All now is possible,
Fact's grandeur, no false dreaming ! Dare and do !
And every prophecy shall be fulfilled 335
Save one—(nay, now your word must come at last)
—That you would punish Florence !
Husain [*pointing to LURIA's dead body*]. That is
done.

A SOUL'S TRAGEDY

ACT FIRST BEING WHAT WAS CALLED
THE POETRY OF CHIAPPINO'S LIFE
AND ACT SECOND ITS PROSE

PERSONS

LUITOLFO *and* EULALIA, *betrothed lovers*

CHIAPPINO, *their friend*

OGNIBEN, *the Pope's Legate*

Citizens of Faenza

TIME, 15—. PLACE, *Faenza*

A SOUL'S TRAGEDY

1846

ACT I

SCENE.—*Inside LUITOLFO'S house*

CHIAPPINO, EULALIA

Eulalia. What is it keeps Luitolfo? Night's
fast falling,

And 't was scarce sunset . . . had the ave-bell
Sounded before he sought the Provost's house?

I think not: all he had to say would take

Few minutes, such a very few, to say!

5

How do you think, Chiappino? If our lord

The Provost were less friendly to your friend

Than everybody here professes him,

I should begin to tremble—should not you?

Why are you silent when so many times

10

I turn and speak to you?

Chiappino.

That's good!

Eulalia.

You laugh?

Chiappino. Yes. I had fancied nothing that
bears price

In the whole world was left to call my own;

And, may be, felt a little pride thereat.

Up to a single man's or woman's love,

15

Down to the right in my own flesh and blood,

There's nothing mine, I fancied,—till you spoke:

—Counting, you see, as “ nothing ” the permission
To study this peculiar lot of mine
In silence : well, go silence with the rest 20
Of the world's good ! What can I say, shall serve ?

Eulalia. This,—lest you, even more than needs,
embitter

Our parting : say your wrongs have cast, for once,
A cloud across your spirit !

Chiappino. How a cloud ?

Eulalia. No man nor woman loves you, did you
say ? 25

Chiappino. My God, were 't not for thee !

Eulalia. Ay, God remains,
Even did men forsake you.

Chiappino. Oh, not so !

Were 't not for God, I mean, what hope of truth—
Speaking truth, hearing truth, would stay with man ?
I, now—the homeless friendless penniless 30
Proscribed and exiled wretch who speak to you,—
Ought to speak truth, yet could not, for my death,
(The thing that tempts me most) help speaking lies
About your friendship and Luitolfo's courage
And all our townsfolk's equanimity— 35

Through sheer incompetence to rid myself
Of the old miserable lying trick
Caught from the liars I have lived with,—God,
Did I not turn to thee ! It is thy prompting
I dare to be ashamed of, and thy counsel 40
Would die along my coward lip, I know.

But I do turn to thee. This craven tongue,
These features which refuse the soul its way,
Reclaim thou ! Give me truth—truth, power to
speak—

And after be sole present to approve 45
The spoken truth ! Or, stay, that spoken truth,
Who knows but you, too, may approve ?

Eulalia.

Ah, well—

Keep silence then, Chiappino !

Chiappino.

You would hear,
You shall now,—why the thing we please to
style

My gratitude to you and all your friends 50

For service done me, is just gratitude

So much as yours was service : no whit more.

I was born here, so was Luitolfo ; both

At one time, much with the same circumstance

Of rank and wealth ; and both, up to this night 55

Of parting company, have side by side

Still fared, he in the sunshine—I, the shadow.

“Why?” asks the world. “Because,” replies
the world

To its complacent self, “these playfellows,

“Who took at church the holy-water drop 60

“Each from the other's finger, and so forth,—

“Were of two moods : Luitolfo was the proper

“Friend-making, everywhere friend-finding soul,

“Fit for the sunshine, so, it followed him.

“A happy-tempered bringer of the best 65

“Out of the worst ; who bears with what 's past
cure,

“And puts so good a face on 't—wisely passive

“Where action 's fruitless, while he remedies

“In silence what the foolish rail against ;

“A man to smooth such natures as parade 70

“Of opposition must exasperate ;

“No general gauntlet-gatherer for the weak

“Against the strong, yet over-scrupulous

“At lucky junctures ; one who won't forego

“The after-battle work of binding wounds, 75

“Because, forsooth he 'd have to bring himself

“To side with wound-inflictors for their leave !”

—Why do you gaze, nor help me to repeat

What comes so glibly from the common mouth,
About Luitolfo and his so-styled friend ? 80

Eulalia. Because that friend's sense is obscured . . .

Chiappino. I thought
You would be readier with the other half
Of the world's story, my half ! Yet, 't is true.
For all the world does say it. Say your worst !
True, I thank God, I ever said "you sin," 85
When a man did sin : if I could not say it,
I glared it at him ; if I could not glare it,
I prayed against him ; then my part seemed over.
God's may begin yet : so it will, I trust.

Eulalia. If the world outraged you, did we ?

Chiappino. What 's "me" 90
That you use well or ill ? It 's man, in me,
All your successes are an outrage to,
You all, whom sunshine follows, as you say !
Here 's our Faenza birthplace ; they send here
A provost from Ravenna : how he rules, 95
You can at times be eloquent about.
"Then, end his rule !"—"Ah yes, one stroke
does that !

"But patience under wrong works slow and sure.

"Must violence still bring peace forth ? He,
beside,

"Returns so blandly one's obeisance ! ah— 100

"Some latent virtue may be lingering yet,

"Some human sympathy which, once excite,

"And all the lump were leavened quietly :

"So, no more talk of striking, for this time !"

But I, as one of those he rules, won't bear 105

These pretty takings-up and layings-down

Our cause, just as you think occasion suits.

Enough of earnest, is there ? You 'll play, will
you ?

Diversify your tactics, give submission,
Obsequiousness and flattery a turn, 110
While we die in our misery patient deaths?
We all are outraged then, and I the first :
I, for mankind, resent each shrug and smirk,
Each beck and bend, each . . . all you do and are,
I hate !

Eulalia. We share a common censure, then. 115
'T is well you have not poor Luitolfo's part
Nor mine to point out in the wide offence.

Chiappino. Oh, shall I let you so escape me,
lady ?
Come, on your own ground, lady,—from yourself,
(Leaving the people's wrong, which most is mine) 120
What have I got to be so grateful for ?
These three last fines, no doubt, one on the other
Paid by Luitolfo ?

Eulalia. Shame, Chiappino !

Chiappino. Shame
Fall presently on who deserves it most !
—Which is to see. He paid my fines—my friend, 125
Your prosperous smooth lover presently,
Then, scarce your wooer,—soon, your husband :
well—

I loved you.

Eulalia. Hold !

Chiappino. You knew it, years ago.
When my voice faltered and my eye grew dim
Because you gave me your silk mask to hold— 130
My voice that greatens when there 's need to curse
The people's Provost to their heart's content,
—My eye, the Provost, who bears all men's eyes,
Banishes now because he cannot bear,—
You knew . . . but you do your parts—my part, I : 135
So be it ! You flourish, I decay : all 's well.

Eulalia. I hear this for the first time.

Chiappino.

The fault 's there ?

Then my days spoke not, and my nights of fire
Were voiceless ? Then the very heart may burst,
Yet all prove nought, because no mincing speech 140
Tells leisurely that thus it is and thus ?

Eulalia, truce with toying for this once !
A banished fool, who troubles you to-night
For the last time—why, what 's to fear from me ?
You knew I loved you !

Eulalia.

Not so, on my faith ! 145

You were my now-affianced lover's friend—
Came in, went out with him, could speak as he.
All praise your ready parts and pregnant wit ;
See how your words come from you in a crowd !
Luitolfo 's first to place you o'er himself 150
In all that challenges respect and love :
Yet you were silent then, who blame me now.
I say all this by fascination, sure :
I, all but wed to one I love, yet listen !
It must be, you are wronged, and that the wrongs 155
Luitolfo pities . . .

Chiappino.

—You too pity ? Do !

But hear first what my wrongs are ; so began
This talk and so shall end this talk. I say,
Was 't not enough that I must strive (I saw)
To grow so far familiar with your charms 160
As next contrive some way to win them—which
To do, an age seemed far too brief—for, see !
We all aspire to heaven ; and there lies heaven
Above us : go there ! Dare we go ? no, surely !
How dare we go without a reverent pause, 165
A growing less unfit for heaven ? Just so,
I dared not speak : the greater fool, it seems !
Was 't not enough to struggle with such folly,
But I must have, beside, the very man
Whose slight free loose and incapacious soul 170

Gave his tongue scope to say whate'er he would
—Must have him load me with his benefits
—For fortune's fiercest stroke?

Eulalia. Justice to him
That's now entreating, at his risk perhaps,
Justice for you! Did he once call those acts 175
Of simple friendship—bounties, benefits?

Chiappino. No: the straight course had been to
call them thus.

Then, I had flung them back, and kept myself
Unhampered, free as he to win the prize
We both sought. But "the gold was dross," he said: 180
"He loved me, and I loved him not: why spurn
"A trifle out of superfluity?

"He had forgotten he had done as much."
So had not I! Henceforth, try as I could
To take him at his word, there stood by you 185
My benefactor; who might speak and laugh
And urge his nothings, even banter me
Before you—but my tongue was tied. A dream!
Let's wake: your husband . . . how you shake
at that!

Good—my revenge!

Eulalia. Why should I shake? What forced 190
Or forces me to be Luitolfo's bride?

Chiappino. There's my revenge, that nothing
forces you.

No gratitude, no liking of the eye
Nor longing of the heart, but the poor bond
Of habit—here so many times he came, 195
So much he spoke,—all these compose the tie
That pulls you from me. Well, he paid my fines,
Nor missed a cloak from wardrobe, dish from table;
He spoke a good word to the Provost here,
Held me up when my fortunes fell away 200
—It had not looked so well to let me drop—

Men take pains to preserve a tree-stump, even,
Whose boughs they played beneath—much more
a friend.

But one grows tired of seeing, after the first,
Pains spent upon impracticable stuff 205

Like me. I could not change : you know the rest.

I 've spoke my mind too fully out, by chance,
This morning to our Provost ; so, ere night
I leave the city on pain of death. And now
On my account there 's gallant intercession 210

Goes forward—that 's so graceful !—and anon

He 'll noisily come back : "the intercession

"Was made and fails ; all 's over for us both ;

"'T is vain contending ; I would better go." 215

And I do go—and straight to you he turns

Light of a load ; and ease of that permits

His visage to repair the natural bland

Æconomy, sore broken late to suit

My discontent. Thus, all are pleased—you, with
him,

He with himself, and all of you with me 220

—"Who," say the citizens, "had done far better

"In letting people sleep upon their woes,

"If not possessed with talent to relieve them

"When once awake ;—but then I had," they'll say,

"Doubtless some unknown compensating pride 225

"In what I did ; and as I seem content

"With ruining myself, why, so should they be."

And so they are, and so be with his prize

The devil, when he gets them speedily !

Why does not your Luitolfo come ? I long 230

To don this cloak and take the Lugo path.

It seems you never loved me, then ?

Eulalia.

Chiappino !

Chiappino. Never ?

Eulalia.

Never.

Chiappino. That 's sad. Say what I might,
There was no help from being sure this while
You loved me. Love like mine must have return, 235
I thought : no river starts but to some sea.
And had you loved me, I could soon devise
Some specious reason why you stifled love,
Some fancied self-denial on your part,
Which made you choose Luitolfo ; so, excepting 240
From the wide condemnation of all here,
One woman. Well, the other dream may break !
If I knew any heart, as mine loved you,
Loved me, though in the vilest breast 't were
lodged,

I should, I think, be forced to love again : 245
Else there 's no right nor reason in the world.

Eulalia. " If you knew," say you,—but I did
not know.

That 's where you 're blind, Chiappino!—a disease
Which if I may remove, I 'll not repent
The listening to. You cannot, will not, see 250
How, place you but in every circumstance
Of us, you are just now indignant at,
You 'd be as we.

Chiappino. I should be? . . . that ; again !
I, to my friend, my country and my love,
Be as Luitolfo and these Faentines? 255

Eulalia. As we.

Chiappino. Now, I'll say something to remember.
I trust in nature for the stable laws
Of beauty and utility.—Spring shall plant,
And Autumn garner to the end of time :
I trust in God—the right shall be the right 260
And other than the wrong, while he endures :
I trust in my own soul, that can perceive
The outward and the inward, nature's good
And God's : so, seeing these men and myself,

Having a right to speak, thus do I speak. 265

I'll not curse—God bears with them, well may I—

But I—protest against their claiming me.

I simply say, if that 's allowable,

I would not (broadly) do as they have done.

—God curse this townful of born slaves, bred
slaves, 270

Branded into the blood and bone, slaves! Curse

Whoever loves, above his liberty,

House, land or life! and . . . [*A knocking without.*

—bless my hero-friend,

Luitolfo!

Eulalia. How he knocks!

Chiappino. The peril, lady!

"Chiappino, I have run a risk—a risk! 275

"For when I prayed the Provost (he 's my friend)

"To grant you a week's respite of the sentence

"That confiscates your goods, exiles yourself,

"He shrugged his shoulder—I say, shrugged it!

Yes,

"And fright of that drove all else from my head. 280

"Here 's a good purse of *scudi*: off with you,

"Lest of that shrug come what God only knows!

"The *scudi*—friend, they 're trash—no thanks, I
beg!

"Take the north gate,—for San Vitale's suburb,

"Whose double taxes you appealed against, 285

"In discomposure at your ill-success

"Is apt to stone you: there, there—only go!

"Beside, Eulalia here looks sleepily.

"Shake . . . oh, you hurt me, so you squeeze
my wrist!"

—Is it not thus you 'll speak, adventurous friend? 290

[*As he opens the door, LUITOLFO rushes in,
his garments disordered.*

Eulalia. Luitolfo! Blood?

Luitolfo. There's more—and more of it!
Eulalia—take the garment! No—you, friend!
You take it and the blood from me—you dare!

Eulalia. Oh, who has hurt you? where's the wound?

Chiappino. "Who," say you?
The man with many a touch of virtue yet! 295
The Provost's friend has proved too frank of speech,

And this comes of it. Miserable hound!
This comes of temporizing, as I said!
Here's fruit of your smooth speeches and soft looks!
Now see my way! As God lives, I go straight 300
To the palace and do justice, once for all!

Luitolfo. What says he?

Chiappino. I'll do justice on him.

Luitolfo. Him?

Chiappino. The Provost.

Luitolfo. I've just killed him.

Eulalia. Oh, my God!

Luitolfo. My friend, they're on my trace;
they'll have me—now!

They're round him, busy with him: soon they'll find 305

He's past their help, and then they'll be on me!
Chiappino, save Eulalia! I forget . . .

Were you not bound for . . .

Chiappino. Lugo?

Luitolfo. Ah—yes—yes!

That was the point I prayed of him to change.

Well, go—be happy! Is Eulalia safe? 310

They're on me!

Chiappino. 'Tis through me they reach you, then!
Friend, seem the man you are! Lock arms—
that's right!

Now tell me what you've done; explain how you

That still professed forbearance, still preached
peace,

Could bring yourself . . .

Luitolfo. What was peace for, Chiappino? 315
I tried peace: did that promise, when peace failed,
Strife should not follow? All my peaceful days
Were just the prelude to a day like this.

I cried "You call me 'friend': save my true friend!
"Save him, or lose me!"

Chiappino. But you never said 320
You meant to tell the Provost thus and thus.

Luitolfo. Why should I say it? What else did
I mean?

Chiappino. Well? He persisted?

Luitolfo. —"Would so order it
"You should not trouble him too soon again."
I saw a meaning in his eye and lip; 325

I poured my heart's store of indignant words
Out on him: then—I know not! He retorted,
And I . . . some staff lay there to hand—I think
He bade his servants thrust me out—I struck . . .
Ah, they come! Fly you, save yourselves, you two! 330
The dead back-weight of the beheading axe!
The glowing trip-hook, thumbscrews and the
gadage!

Eulalia. They do come! Torches in the Place!
Farewell,

Chiappino! You can work no good to us—
Much to yourself; believe not, all the world 335
Must needs be cursed henceforth!

Chiappino. And you?

Eulalia. I stay.

Chiappino. Ha, ha! Now, listen! I am master
here!

This was my coarse disguise; this paper shows
My path of flight and place of refuge—see—

Lugo, Argenta, past San Nicolo,
Ferrara, then to Venice and all 's safe ! 340

Put on the cloak ! His people have to fetch
A compass round about. There 's time enough
Ere they can reach us, so you straightway make
For Lugo . . . nay, he hears not ! On with it— 345
The cloak, Luitolfo, do you hear me ? See—
He obeys he knows not how. Then, if I must—
Answer me ! Do you know the Lugo gate ?

Eulalia. The north-west gate, over the bridge ?

Luitolfo. I know.

Chiappino. Well, there—you are not frightened?
all my route 350

Is traced in that : at Venice you escape
Their power. Eulalia, I am master here !

[*Shouts from without. He pushes out LUITOLFO, who complies mechanically.*

In time ! Nay, help me with him—so ! He 's gone.

Eulalia. What have you done ? On you, per-
chance, all know

The Provost's hater, will men's vengeance fall 355
As our accomplice.

Chiappino. Mere accomplice ? See !

[*Putting on LUITOLFO's vest.*

Now, lady, am I true to my profession,
Or one of these ?

Eulalia. You take Luitolfo's place ?

Chiappino. Die for him.

Eulalia. Well done ! [*Shouts increase.*

Chiappino. How the people tarry !

I can't be silent ; I must speak : or sing— 360
How natural to sing now !

Eulalia. Hush and pray !

We are to die ; but even I perceive
'T is not a very hard thing so to die.

My cousin of the pale-blue tearful eyes,

Poor Cesca, suffers more from one day's life 365
With the stern husband ; Tisbe's heart goes forth
Each evening after that wild son of hers,
To track his thoughtless footstep through the
streets :

How easy for them both to die like this !

I am not sure that I could live as they. 370

Chiappino. Here they come, crowds ! They pass
the gate ? Yes !—No !—

One torch is in the courtyard. Here flock all.

Eulalia. At least Luitolfo has escaped. What
cries !

Chiappino. If they would drag one to the market-
place,

One might speak there !

Eulalia.

List, list !

Chiappino. They mount the steps. 375

Enter the Populace

Chiappino. I killed the Provost !

The Populace [speaking together]. 'T was
Chiappino, friends !

Our saviour ! The best man at last as first !

He who first made us feel what chains we wore,

He also strikes the blow that shatters them,

He at last saves us—our best citizen ! 380

—Oh, have you only courage to speak now ?

My eldest son was christened a year since

“Cino” to keep Chiappino's name in mind—

Cino, for shortness merely, you observe !

The city 's in our hands. The guards are fled. 385

Do you, the cause of all, come down—come up—

Come out to counsel us, our chief, our king,

Whate'er rewards you ! Choose your own reward !

The peril over, its reward begins !

Come and harangue us in the market-place ! 390

Eulalia. Chiappino?

Chiappino. Yes—I understand your eyes !
You think I should have promptlier disowned
This deed with its strange unforeseen success,
In favour of Luitolfo. But the peril,
So far from ended, hardly seems begun. 395
To-morrow, rather, when a calm succeeds,
We easily shall make him full amends :
And meantime—if we save them as they pray,
And justify the deed by its effects ?

Eulalia. You would, for worlds, you had denied
at once. 400

Chiappino. I know my own intention, be
assured !
All 's well. Precede us, fellow-citizens !

ACT II

SCENE.—*The Market-place. LUITOLFO in disguise mingling with the Populace assembled opposite the Provost's Palace*

1st Bystander [to LUITOLFO]. You, a friend of Luitolfo's? Then, your friend is vanished,—in all probability killed on the night that his patron the tyrannical Provost was loyally suppressed here, exactly a month ago, by our illustrious fellow-citizen, thrice-noble saviour, and new Provost that is like to be, this very morning,—Chiappino ! 5

Luitolfo. He the new Provost?

2nd Bystander. Up those steps will he go, and beneath yonder pillar stand, while Ogniben, the Pope's Legate from Ravenna, reads the new dignitary's title to the people, according to established custom: for which reason, there is the assemblage you inquire about. 10

Luitolfo. Chiappino—the late Provost's successor? Impossible! But tell me of that presently. What I would know first of all is, wherefore Luitolfo must so necessarily have been killed on that memorable night? 15

3rd Bystander. You were Luitolfo's friend? So was I. Never, if you will credit me, did there exist so poor-spirited a milksop. He, with all the opportunities in the world, furnished by daily converse with our oppressor, would not stir a finger to help us: and, when Chiappino rose in 25

solitary majesty and . . . how does one go on saying? . . . dealt the godlike blow,—this Luitolfo, not unreasonably fearing the indignation of an aroused and liberated people, fled precipitately. He may have got trodden to death in the press at the south-east gate, when the Provost's guards fled through it to Ravenna, with their wounded master,—if he did not rather hang himself under some hedge.

Luitolfo. Or why not simply have lain perdue in some quiet corner,—such as San Cassiano, where his estate was,—receiving daily intelligence from some sure friend, meanwhile, as to the turn matters were taking here—how, for instance, the Provost was not dead, after all, only wounded—
or, as to-day's news would seem to prove, how Chiappino was not Brutus the Elder, after all, only the new Provost—and thus Luitolfo be enabled to watch a favourable opportunity for returning? Might it not have been so?

3rd Bystander. Why, he may have taken that care of himself, certainly, for he came of a cautious stock. I 'll tell you how his uncle, just such another gingerly treader on tiptoes with finger on lip,—how he met his death in the great plague-year: *dico vobis!* Hearing that the seventeenth house in a certain street was infected, he calculates to pass it in safety by taking plentiful breath, say, when he shall arrive at the eleventh house; then scouring by, holding that breath, till he be got so far on the other side as number twenty-three, and thus elude the danger.—And so did he begin; but, as he arrived at thirteen, we will say,—thinking to improve on his precaution by putting up a little prayer to St. Nepomucene of Prague, this exhausted so much

of his lungs' reserve, that at sixteen it was clean spent,—consequently at the fatal seventeen he inhaled with a vigour and persistence enough to suck you any latent venom out of the heart of 65 a stone—Ha, ha!

Luitolfo [*aside*]. (If I had not lent that man the money he wanted last spring, I should fear this bitterness was attributable to me.) Luitolfo is dead then, one may conclude? 70

3rd Bystander. Why, he had a house here, and a woman to whom he was affianced; and as they both pass naturally to the new Provost, his friend and heir . . .

Luitolfo. Ah, I suspected you of imposing on me 75 with your pleasantry! I know Chiappino better.

1st Bystander. (Our friend has the bile! After all, I do not dislike finding somebody vary a little this general gape of admiration at Chiappino's glorious qualities.) Pray, how much may you 80 know of what has taken place in Faenza since that memorable night?

Luitolfo. It is most to the purpose, that I know Chiappino to have been by profession a hater of that very office of Provost, you now charge him 85 with proposing to accept.

1st Bystander. Sir, I'll tell you. That night was indeed memorable. Up we rose, a mass of us, men, women, children; out fled the guards with the body of the tyrant; we were to defy 90 the world: but, next grey morning, "What will Rome say?" began everybody. You know we are governed by Ravenna, which is governed by Rome. And quietly into the town, by the Ravenna road, comes on muleback a portly personage, Ogniben by name, with the quality of 95 Pontifical Legate; trots briskly through the

streets humming a "*Cur fremuere gentes*," and makes directly for the Provost's Palace—there it faces you. "One Messer Chiappino is your leader? I have known three-and-twenty leaders of revolts!" (laughing gently to himself)—"Give me the help of your arm from my mule to yonder steps under the pillar—So! And now, my revolters and good friends, what do you want? The guards burst into Ravenna last night bearing your wounded Provost; and, having had a little talk with him, I take on myself to come and try appease the disorderliness, before Rome, hearing of it, resort to another method: 't is I come, and not another, from a certain love I confess to, of composing differences. So, do you understand, you are about to experience this unheard-of tyranny from me, that there shall be no heading nor hanging, no confiscation nor exile: I insist on your simply pleasing yourselves. And now, pray, what does please you? To live without any government at all? Or having decided for one, to see its minister murdered by the first of your body that chooses to find himself wronged, or disposed for reverting to first principles and a justice anterior to all institutions,—and so will you carry matters, that the rest of the world must at length unite and put down such a den of wild beasts? As for vengeance on what has just taken place,—once for all, the wounded man assures me he cannot conjecture who struck him; and this so earnestly, that one may be sure he knows perfectly well what intimate acquaintance could find admission to speak with him late last evening. I come not for vengeance therefore, but from pure curiosity to hear what you will do next." And thus he ran on, on, easily and volubly, till he

seemed to arrive quite naturally at the praise of law, order, and paternal government by somebody from rather a distance. All our citizens were in the snare, and about to be friends with so congenial an adviser; but that Chiappino suddenly stood forth, spoke out indignantly, and set things right again. 135

Luitolfo. Do you see? I recognize him there! 140

3rd Bystander. Ay but, mark you, at the end of Chiappino's longest period in praise of a pure republic,—“And by whom do I desire such a government should be administered, perhaps, but by one like yourself?”—returns the Legate: there-upon speaking for a quarter of an hour together, on the natural and only legitimate government by the best and wisest. And it should seem there was soon discovered to be no such vast discrepancy at bottom between this and Chiappino's theory, place but each in its proper light. “Oh, are you there?” quoth Chiappino: “Ay, in that, I agree,” returns Chiappino: and so on. 145 150

Luitolfo. But did Chiappino cede at once to this? 155

1st Bystander. Why, not altogether at once. For instance, he said that the difference between him and all his fellows was, that they seemed all wishing to be kings in one or another way,—“whereas what right,” asked he, “has any man to wish to be superior to another?”—whereat, “Ah, sir,” answers the Legate, “this is the death of me, so often as I expect something is really going to be revealed to us by you clearer-seers, deeper-thinkers—this—that your right-hand (to speak by a figure) should be found taking up the weapon it displayed so ostentatiously, not to destroy any dragon in our path, as was prophesied, 165

but simply to cut off its own fellow left-hand : 170
yourself set about attacking yourself. For see
now ! Here are you who, I make sure, glory
exceedingly in knowing the noble nature of the
soul, its divine impulses, and so forth ; and with
such a knowledge you stand, as it were, armed to 175
encounter the natural doubts and fears as to that
same inherent nobility, which are apt to waylay
us, the weaker ones, in the road of life. And
when we look eagerly to see them fall before you,
lo, round you wheel, only the left-hand gets the 180
blow ; one proof of the soul's nobility destroys
simply another proof, quite as good, of the same,
for you are found delivering an opinion like this !
Why, what is this perpetual yearning to exceed,
to subdue, to be better than, and a king over, one's 185
fellows,—all that you so disclaim,—but the very
tendency yourself are most proud of, and under
another form, would oppose to it,—only in a lower
stage of manifestation ? You don't want to be
vulgarly superior to your fellows after their poor 190
fashion—to have me hold solemnly up your gown's
tail, or hand you an express of the last importance
from the Pope, with all these bystanders noticing
how unconcerned you look the while : but neither
does our gaping friend, the burgess yonder, want 195
the other kind of kingship, that consists in under-
standing better than his fellows this and similar
points of human nature, nor to roll under his
tongue this sweeter morsel still,—the feeling that,
through immense philosophy, he does *not* feel, he 200
rather thinks, above you and me !” And so chat-
ting, they glided off arm-in-arm.

Luitolfo. And the result is . . .

1st Bystander. Why that, a month having gone
by, the indomitable Chiappino, marrying as he will 205

Luitolfo's love—at all events succeeding to Luitolfo's wealth—becomes the first inhabitant of Faenza, and a proper aspirant to the Provostship ; which we assemble here to see conferred on him this morning. The Legate's Guard to clear the way ! He will follow presently. 210

Luitolfo [*withdrawing a little*]. I understand the drift of Eulalia's communications less than ever. Yet she surely said, in so many words, that Chiappino was in urgent danger : wherefore, dis- 215 regarding her injunction to continue in my retreat and await the result of—what she called, some experiment yet in process—I hastened here without her leave or knowledge : how could I else ? But if this they say be true—if it were for such a 220 purpose, she and Chiappino kept me away . . . Oh, no, no ! I must confront him and her before I believe this of them. And at the word, see !

Enter CHIAPPINO and EULALIA

Eulalia. We part here, then ? The change in your principles would seem to be complete. 225

Chiappino. Now, why refuse to see that in my present course I change no principles, only re-adapt them and more adroitly ? I had despaired of, what you may call the material instrumentality of life ; of ever being able to rightly operate on 230 mankind through such a deranged machinery as the existing modes of government : but now, if I suddenly discover how to inform these perverted institutions with fresh purpose, bring the functionary limbs once more into immediate communi- 235 cation with, and subjection to, the soul I am about to bestow on them—do you see ? Why should one desire to invent, as long as it remains possible to renew and transform ? When all further hope of

the old organization shall be extinct, then, I 240
grant you, it may be time to try and create
another.

Eulalia. And there being discoverable some
hope yet in the hitherto much-abused old system
of absolute government by a Provost here, you 245
mean to take your time about endeavouring to
realize those visions of a perfect State, we once
heard of?

Chiappino. Say, I would fain realize my concep-
tion of a palace, for instance, and that there is, 250
abstractedly, but a single way of erecting one
perfectly. Here, in the market-place is my allotted
building-ground; here I stand without a stone to
lay, or a labourer to help me,—stand, too, during
a short day of life, close on which the night comes. 255
On the other hand, circumstances suddenly offer
me (turn and see it!) the old Provost's house to
experiment upon—ruinous, if you please, wrongly
constructed at the beginning, and ready to tumble
now. But materials abound, a crowd of workmen 260
offer their services; here, exists yet a Hall of
Audience of originally noble proportions, there a
Guest-chamber of symmetrical design enough:
and I may restore, enlarge, abolish or unite these
to heart's content. Ought I not make the best 265
of such an opportunity, rather than continue to
gaze disconsolately with folded arms on the flat
pavement here, while the sun goes slowly down,
never to rise again? Since you cannot understand
this nor me, it is better we should part as you 270
desire.

Eulalia. So, the love breaks away too!

Chiappino. No, rather my soul's capacity for
love widens—needs more than one object to
content it,—and, being better instructed, will not 275

the old organization shall be extinct, then, I ²⁴⁰
grant you, it may be time to try and create
another.

Eulalia. And there being discoverable some
hope yet in the hitherto much-abused old system
of absolute government by a Provost here, you ²⁴⁵
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realize those visions of a perfect State, we once
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Chiappino. Say, I would fain realize my concep-
tion of a palace, for instance, and that there is, ²⁵⁰
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building-ground; here I stand without a stone to
lay, or a labourer to help me,—stand, too, during
a short day of life, close on which the night comes. ²⁵⁵
On the other hand, circumstances suddenly offer
me (turn and see it!) the old Provost's house to
experiment upon—ruinous, if you please, wrongly
constructed at the beginning, and ready to tumble
now. But materials abound, a crowd of workmen ²⁶⁰
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Audience of originally noble proportions, there a
Guest-chamber of symmetrical design enough:
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to heart's content. Ought I not make the best ²⁶⁵
of such an opportunity, rather than continue to
gaze disconsolately with folded arms on the flat
pavement here, while the sun goes slowly down,
never to rise again? Since you cannot understand
this nor me, it is better we should part as you ²⁷⁰
desire.

Eulalia. So, the love breaks away too!

Chiappino. No, rather my soul's capacity for
love widens—needs more than one object to
content it,—and, being better instructed, will not ²⁷⁵

persist in seeing all the component parts of love in what is only a single part,—nor in finding that so many and so various loves are all united in the love of a woman,—manifold uses in one instrument, as the savage has his sword, staff, sceptre 280 and idol, all in one club-stick. Love is a very compound thing. The intellectual part of my love I shall give to men, the mighty dead or the illustrious living; and determine to call a mere sensual instinct by as few fine names as possible. 285 What do I lose?

Eulalia. Nay, I only think, what do I lose? and, one more word—which shall complete my instruction—does friendship go too? What of Luitolfo, the author of your present prosperity? 290

Chiappino. How the author?

Eulalia. That blow now called yours . . .

Chiappino. Struck without principle or purpose, as by a blind natural operation: yet to which all my thought and life directly and advisedly tended. 295 I would have struck it, and could not: he would have done his utmost to avoid striking it, yet did so. I dispute his right to that deed of mine—a final action with him, from the first effect of which he fled away,—a mere first step with me, on which 300 I base a whole mighty superstructure of good to follow. Could he get good from it?

Eulalia. So we profess, so we perform!

Enter OGNIBEN. *EULALIA stands apart*

Ogniben. I have seen three-and-twenty leaders of revolts. By your leave, sir! Perform? What 305 does the lady say of performing?

Chiappino. Only the trite saying, that we must not trust profession, only performance.

Ogniben. She'll not say that, sir, when she

knows you longer ; you 'll instruct her better. 310
Ever judge of men by their professions ! For
though the bright moment of promising is but a
moment and cannot be prolonged, yet, if sincere
in its moment's extravagant goodness, why, trust
it and know the man by it, I say—not by his per- 315
formance ; which is half the world's work, inter-
fere as the world needs must, with its accidents
and circumstances : the profession was purely the
man's own. I judge people by what they might
be,—not are, nor will be. 320

Chiappino. But have there not been found, too,
performing natures, not merely promising ?

Ogniben. Plenty. Little Bindo of our town, for
instance, promised his friend, great ugly Masaccio,
once, "I will repay you !"—for a favour done 325
him. So, when his father came to die, and Bindo
succeeded to the inheritance, he sends straightway
for Masaccio and shares all with him—gives him
half the land, half the money, half the kegs of
wine in the cellar. "Good," say you : and it is 330
good. But had little Bindo found himself pos-
sessor of all this wealth some five years before
—on the happy night when Masaccio procured
him that interview in the garden with his pretty
cousin Lisa—instead of being the beggar he then 335
was,—I am bound to believe that in the warm
moment of promise he would have given away all
the wine-kegs and all the money and all the land,
and only reserved to himself some hut on a hill-
top hard by, whence he might spend his life in 340
looking and seeing his friend enjoy himself : he
meant fully that much, but the world interfered.—
To our business ! Did I understand you just now
within-doors ? You are not going to marry your
old friend's love, after all ? 345

Chiappino. I must have a woman that can sympathize with, and appreciate me, I told you.

Ogniben. Oh, I remember! you, the greater nature, needs must have a lesser one (—avowedly 350 lesser—contest with you on that score would never do)—such a nature must comprehend you, as the phrase is, accompany and testify of your greatness from point to point onward. Why, that were being not merely as great as yourself, but greater 355 considerably! Meantime, might not the more bounded nature as reasonably count on your appreciation of it, rather?—on your keeping close by it, so far as you both go together, and then going on by yourself as far as you please? Thus 360 God serves us.

Chiappino. And yet a woman that could understand the whole of me, to whom I could reveal alike the strength and the weakness—

Ogniben. Ah, my friend, wish for nothing so 365 foolish! Worship your love, give her the best of you to see; be to her like the western lands (they bring us such strange news of) to the Spanish Court; send her only your lumps of gold, fans of feathers, your spirit-like birds, and fruits and gems! 370 So shall you, what is unseen of you, be supposed altogether a paradise by her,—as these western lands by Spain: though I warrant there is filth, red baboons, ugly reptiles and squalor enough, which they bring Spain as few samples of as 375 possible. Do you want your mistress to respect your body generally? Offer her your mouth to kiss: don't strip off your boot and put your foot to her lips! You understand my humour by this time? I help men to carry out their own prin- 380 ciples: if they please to say two and two make five,

I assent, so they will but go on and say, four and four make ten.

Chiappino. But these are my private affairs; what I desire you to occupy yourself about, is my public appearance presently: for when the people hear that I am appointed Provost, though you and I may thoroughly discern—and easily, too—the right principle at bottom of such a movement, and how my republicanism remains thoroughly unaltered, only takes a form of expression hitherto commonly judged (and heretofore by myself) incompatible with its existence,—when thus I reconcile myself to an old form of government instead of proposing a new one . . .

Ogniben. Why, you must deal with people broadly. Begin at a distance from this matter and say,—New truths, old truths! sirs, there is nothing new possible to be revealed to us in the moral world; we know all we shall ever know: and it is for simply reminding us, by their various respective expedients, how we do know this and the other matter, that men get called prophets, poets and the like. A philosopher's life is spent in discovering that, of the half-dozen truths he knew when a child, such an one is a lie, as the world states it in set terms; and then, after a weary lapse of years, and plenty of hard-thinking, it becomes a truth again after all, as he happens to newly consider it and view it in a different relation with the others: and so he restates it, to the confusion of somebody else in good time. As for adding to the original stock of truths,—impossible! Thus, you see the expression of them is the grand business:—you have got a truth in your head about the right way of governing people, and you took a mode of expressing it which now

you confess to be imperfect. But what then? There is truth in falsehood, falsehood in truth. No man ever told one great truth, that I know, 420 without the help of a good dozen of lies at least, generally unconscious ones. And as when a child comes in breathlessly and relates a strange story, you try to conjecture from the very falsities in it, what the reality was,—do not conclude that 425 he saw nothing in the sky, because he assuredly did not see a flying horse there as he says,—so, through the contradictory expression, do you see, men should look painfully for, and trust to arrive eventually at, what you call the true principle at 430 bottom. Ah, what an answer is there! to what will it not prove applicable?—"Contradictions? Of course there were," say you!

Chiappino. Still, the world at large may call it inconsistency, and what shall I urge in reply? 435

Ogniben. Why, look you, when they tax you with tergiversation or duplicity, you may answer—you begin to perceive that, when all 's done and said, both great parties in the State, the advocates of change in the present system of 440 things, and the opponents of it, patriot and anti-patriot, are found working together for the common good; and that in the midst of their efforts for and against its progress, the world somehow or other still advances: to which result 445 they contribute in equal proportions, those who spend their life in pushing it onward, as those who give theirs to the business of pulling it back. Now, if you found the world stand still between the opposite forces, and were glad, I should conceive you: but it steadily advances, you rejoice 450 to see! By the side of such a rejoicer, the man who only winks as he keeps cunning and quiet,

and says, "Let yonder hot-headed fellow fight out my battle! I, for one, shall win in the end 455 by the blows he gives, and which I ought to be giving"—even he seems graceful in his avowal, when one considers that he might say, "I shall win quite as much by the blows our antagonist gives him, blows from which he saves me—I 460 thank the antagonist equally!" Moreover, you may enlarge on the loss of the edge of party-animosity with age and experience . . .

Chiappino. And naturally time must wear off such asperities: the bitterest adversaries get to 465 discover certain points of similarity between each other, common sympathies—do they not?

Ogniben. Ay, had the young David but sat first to dine on his cheeses with the Philistine, he had soon discovered an abundance of such common 470 sympathies. He of Gath, it is recorded, was born of a father and mother, had brothers and sisters like another man,—they, no more than the sons of Jesse, were used to eat each other. But, for the sake of one broad antipathy that had existed 475 from the beginning, David slung the stone, cut off the giant's head, made a spoil of it, and after ate his cheeses alone, with the better appetite, for all I can learn. My friend, as you, with a quickened eye-sight, go on discovering much good on the 480 worse side, remember that the same process should proportionably magnify and demonstrate to you the much more good on the better side! And when I profess no sympathy for the Goliaths of our time, and you object that a large nature 485 should sympathize with every form of intelligence, and see the good in it, however limited—I answer, "So I do; but preserve the proportions of my sympathy, however finelier or widelier I may

extend its action." I desire to be able, with a quickened eye-sight, to descry beauty in corruption where others see foulness only : but I hope I shall also continue to see a redoubled beauty in the higher forms of matter, where already everybody sees no foulness at all. I must retain, too, my old power of selection, and choice of appropriation, to apply to such new gifts; else they only dazzle instead of enlightening me. God has his archangels and consorts with them : though he made too, and intimately sees what is good in, the worm. Observe, I speak only as you profess to think and, so, ought to speak : I do justice to your own principles, that is all.

Chiappino. But you very well know that the two parties do, on occasion, assume each other's characteristics. What more disgusting, for instance, than to see how promptly the newly emancipated slave will adopt, in his own favour, the very measures of precaution, which pressed soreliest on himself as institutions of the tyranny he has just escaped from? Do the classes, hitherto without opinion, get leave to express it? there follows a confederacy immediately, from which—exercise your individual right and dissent, and woe be to you !

Ogniben. And a journey over the sea to you ! That is the generous way. Cry—"Emancipated slaves, the first excess, and off I go !" The first time a poor devil, who has been bastinadoed steadily his whole life long, finds himself let alone and able to legislate, so, begins pettishly, while he rubs his soles, "Woe be to whoever brings anything in the shape of a stick this way !"—you, rather than give up the very innocent pleasure of carrying one to switch flies with,—you go away,

to everybody's sorrow. Yet you were quite reconciled to staying at home while the governors used to pass, every now and then, some such edict as "Let no man indulge in owning a stick which is not thick enough to chastise our slaves, 530 if need require!" Well, there are pre-ordained hierarchies among us, and a profane vulgar subjected to a different law altogether; yet I am rather sorry you should see it so clearly: for, do you know what is to—all but save you at the 535 Day of Judgment, all you men of genius? It is this: that, while you generally began by pulling down God, and went on to the end of your life, in one effort at setting up your own genius in his place,—still, the last, bitterest concession wrung 540 with the utmost unwillingness from the experience of the very loftiest of you, was invariably—would one think it?—that the rest of mankind, down to the lowest of the mass, stood not, nor ever could stand, just on a level and equality 545 with yourselves. That will be a point in the favour of all such, I hope and believe.

Chiappino. Why, men of genius are usually charged, I think, with doing just the reverse; and at once acknowledging the natural inequality 550 of mankind, by themselves participating in the universal craving after, and deference to, the civil distinctions which represent it. You wonder they pay such undue respect to titles and badges of superior rank. 555

Ogniben. Not I (always on your own ground and showing, be it noted!) Who doubts that, with a weapon to brandish, a man is the more formidable? Titles and badges are exercised as such a weapon, to which you and I look up wistfully. 560 We could pin lions with it, moreover, while in its

present owner's hands it hardly prods rats. Nay, better than a mere weapon of easy mastery and obvious use, it is a mysterious divining rod that may serve us in undreamed-of ways. Beauty, 565 strength, intellect—men often have none of these, and yet conceive pretty accurately what kind of advantages they would bestow on the possessor. We know at least what it is we make up our mind to forego, and so can apply the fittest substitute in 570 our power. Wanting beauty, we cultivate good humour; missing wit, we get riches: but the mystic unimaginable operation of that gold collar and string of Latin names which suddenly turned poor stupid little peevish Cecco of our town into 575 natural lord of the best of us—a Duke, he is now—there indeed is a virtue to be revered!

Chiappino. Ay, by the vulgar: not by Messere Stiatta the poet, who pays more assiduous court to him than anybody. 580

Ogniben. What else should Stiatta pay court to? He has talent, not honour and riches: men naturally covet what they have not.

Chiappino. No, or Cecco would covet talent, which he has not, whereas he covets more riches, 585 of which he has plenty already.

Ogniben. Because a purse added to a purse makes the holder twice as rich: but just such another talent as Stiatta's, added to what he now possesses, what would that profit him? Give the 590 talent a purse indeed, to do something with! But lo, how we keep the good people waiting! I only desired to do justice to the noble sentiments which animate you, and which you are too modest to duly enforce. Come, to our main 595 business: shall we ascend the steps? I am going to propose you for Provost to the people;

they know your antecedents, and will accept you with a joyful unanimity : whereon I confirm their choice. Rouse up ! Are you nerving yourself to an effort ? Beware the disaster of Messere Stiatto we were talking of ! who, determining to keep an equal mind and constant face on whatever might be the fortune of his last new poem with our townsmen, heard too plainly "hiss, hiss, hiss," increase every moment. Till at last the man fell senseless : not perceiving that the portentous sounds had all the while been issuing from between his own nobly clenched teeth, and nostrils narrowed by resolve.

610

Chiappino. Do you begin to throw off the mask ? —to jest with me, having got me effectually into your trap ?

Ogniben. Where is the trap, my friend ? You hear what I engage to do, for my part : you, for yours, have only to fulfil your promise made just now within doors, of professing unlimited obedience to Rome's authority in my person. And I shall authorize no more than the simple re-establishment of the Provostship and the conferment of its privileges upon yourself : the only novel stipulation being a birth of the peculiar circumstances of the time.

620

Chiappino. And that stipulation ?

Ogniben. Just the obvious one—that in the event of the discovery of the actual assailant of the late Provost . . .

Chiappino. Ha !

Ogniben. Why, he shall suffer the proper penalty, of course ; what did you expect ?

630

Chiappino. Who heard of this ?

Ogniben. Rather, who needed to hear of this ?

Chiappino. Can it be, the popular rumour never reached you . . .

635

Ogniben. Many more such rumours reach me, friend, than I choose to receive; those which wait longest have best chance. Has the present one sufficiently waited? Now is its time for entry with effect. See the good people crowding about yonder palace-steps—which we may not have to ascend, after all. My good friends! (nay, two or three of you will answer every purpose)—who was it fell upon and proved nearly the death of your late Provost? His successor desires to hear, that his day of inauguration may be graced by the act of prompt bare justice we all anticipate. Who dealt the blow that night, does anybody know?

640

Luitolfo [*coming forward*]. I!

All. Luitolfo!

650

Luitolfo. I avow the deed, justify and approve it, and stand forth now, to relieve my friend of an unearned responsibility. Having taken thought, I am grown stronger: I shall shrink from nothing that awaits me. Nay, Chiappino—we are friends still: I dare say there is some proof of your superior nature in this starting aside, strange as it seemed at first. So, they tell me, my horse is of the right stock, because a shadow in the path frightens him into a frenzy, makes him dash my brains out. I understand only the dull mule's way of standing stockishly, plodding soberly, suffering on occasion a blow or two with due patience.

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660

Eulalia. I was determined to justify my choice, Chiappino,—to let Luitolfo's nature vindicate itself. Henceforth we are undivided, whatever be our fortune.

665

Ogniben. Now, in these last ten minutes of

silence, what have I been doing, deem you? 670
Putting the finishing stroke to a homily of mine,
I have long taken thought to perfect, on the text,
“Let whoso thinketh he standeth, take heed lest
he fall.” To your house, Luitolfo! Still silent,
my patriotic friend? Well, that is a good sign, 675
however. And you will go aside for a time?
That is better still. I understand: it would be
easy for you to die of remorse here on the spot
and shock us all, but you mean to live and grow
worthy of coming back to us one day. There, 680
I will tell everybody; and you only do right to
believe you must get better as you get older. All
men do so: they are worst in childhood, improve
in manhood, and get ready in old age for another
world. Youth, with its beauty and grace, would 685
seem bestowed on us for some such reason as to
make us partlyendurable till we have time for really
becoming so of ourselves, without their aid; when
they leave us. The sweetest child we all smile on
for his pleasant want of the whole world to break 690
up, or suck in his mouth, seeing no other good in
it—would be rudely handled by that world’s in-
habitants, if he retained those angelic infantine
desires when he had grown six feet high, black
and bearded. But, little by little, he sees fit to 695
forego claim after claim on the world, puts up
with a less and less share of its good as his proper
portion; and when the octogenarian asks barely
a sup of gruel and a fire of dry sticks, and thanks
you as for his full allowance and right in the 700
common good of life,—hoping nobody may
murder him,—he who began by asking and ex-
pecting the whole of us to bow down in worship
to him,—why, I say he is advanced, far onward,
very far, nearly out of sight like our friend 705

Chiappino. Can it be, the popular rumour never reached you . . .

635

Ogniben. Many more such rumours reach me, friend, than I choose to receive; those which wait longest have best chance. Has the present one sufficiently waited? Now is its time for entry with effect. See the good people crowding about yonder palace-steps—which we may not have to ascend, after all. My good friends! (nay, two or three of you will answer every purpose)—who was it fell upon and proved nearly the death of your late Provost? His successor desires to hear, that his day of inauguration may be graced by the act of prompt bare justice we all anticipate. Who dealt the blow that night, does anybody know?

640

Luitolfo [*coming forward*]. I!

All. Luitolfo!

650

Luitolfo. I avow the deed, justify and approve it, and stand forth now, to relieve my friend of an unearned responsibility. Having taken thought, I am grown stronger: I shall shrink from nothing that awaits me. Nay, Chiappino—we are friends still: I dare say there is some proof of your superior nature in this starting aside, strange as it seemed at first. So, they tell me, my horse is of the right stock, because a shadow in the path frightens him into a frenzy, makes him dash my brains out. I understand only the dull mule's way of standing stockishly, plodding soberly, suffering on occasion a blow or two with due patience.

655

660

Eulalia. I was determined to justify my choice, Chiappino,—to let Luitolfo's nature vindicate itself. Henceforth we are undivided, whatever be our fortune.

665

Ogniben. Now, in these last ten minutes of

silence, what have I been doing, deem you? 670
Putting the finishing stroke to a homily of mine,
I have long taken thought to perfect, on the text,
“Let whoso thinketh he standeth, take heed lest
he fall.” To your house, Luitolfo! Still silent,
my patriotic friend? Well, that is a good sign, 675
however. And you will go aside for a time?
That is better still. I understand: it would be
easy for you to die of remorse here on the spot
and shock us all, but you mean to live and grow
worthy of coming back to us one day. There, 680
I will tell everybody; and you only do right to
believe you must get better as you get older. All
men do so: they are worst in childhood, improve
in manhood, and get ready in old age for another
world. Youth, with its beauty and grace, would 685
seem bestowed on us for some such reason as to
make us partlyendurable till we have time for really
becoming so of ourselves, without their aid; when
they leave us. The sweetest child we all smile on
for his pleasant want of the whole world to break 690
up, or suck in his mouth, seeing no other good in
it—would be rudely handled by that world’s in-
habitants, if he retained those angelic infantine
desires when he had grown six feet high, black
and bearded. But, little by little, he sees fit to 695
forego claim after claim on the world, puts up
with a less and less share of its good as his proper
portion; and when the octogenarian asks barely
a sup of gruel and a fire of dry sticks, and thanks
you as for his full allowance and right in the 700
common good of life,—hoping nobody may
murder him,—he who began by asking and ex-
pecting the whole of us to bow down in worship
to him,—why, I say he is advanced, far onward,
very far, nearly out of sight like our friend 705

Chiappino yonder. And now—(ay, good-bye to you! He turns round the north-west gate: going to Lugo again? Good-bye!)—and now give thanks to God, the keys of the Provost's palace to me, and yourselves to profitable meditation at home! I have known *Four*-and-twenty 710
leaders of revolts.

DRAMATIC LYRICS

DRAMATIC LYRICS

CAVALIER TUNES¹

I.—MARCHING ALONG

I

KENTISH Sir Byng stood for his King,
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing :
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,
Marched them along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

II

God for King Charles ! Pym and such carles
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous
parles !
Cavaliers, up ! Lips from the cup,
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup
Till you 're—

CHORUS.—*Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.*

III

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell.
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well !
England, good cheer ! Rupert is near !
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here

CHORUS.—*Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song ?*

¹ Such Poems as the majority in this volume might also come properly enough, I suppose, under the head of "Dramatic Pieces"; being, though often Lyric in expression, always Dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine.—*R. B.*

DRAMATIC LYRICS

IV

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and his snarls
To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles!
Hold by the right, you double your might;
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

CHORUS.—*March we along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!*

II.—GIVE A ROUSE

I

King Charles, and who 'll do him right now?
King Charles, and who 's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here 's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!

II

Who gave me the goods that went since?
Who raised me the house that sank once?
Who helped me to gold I spent since?
Who found me in wine you drank once?

CHORUS.—*King Charles, and who 'll do him right now?
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!*

III

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
By the old fool's side that begot him?
For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
While Noll's damned troopers shot him?

CHORUS.—*King Charles, and who 'll do him right now?
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!*

CAVALIER TUNES

III.—BOOT AND SADDLE

I

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !
Rescue my castle before the hot day
Brightens to blue from its silvery grey,
CHORUS.—*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !*

II

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you 'd say ;
Many 's the friend there will listen and pray
"God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay—"
CHORUS.—"*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !*"

III

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array :
Who laughs, "Good fellows ere this, by my fay,
CHORUS.—"*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !*"

IV

Who? My wife Gertrude ; that, honest and gay,
Laughs when you talk of surrendering, "Nay !"
"I 've better counsellors ; what counsel they ?"
CHORUS.—"*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !*"

THE LOST LEADER

I

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
Lost all the others she lets us devote ;
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
So much was theirs who so little allowed :
How all our copper had gone for his service !
Rags—weretheypurple, his hearthadbeen proud!
We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured
him,
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear
accents,
Made him our pattern to live and to die !
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from
their graves !
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
—He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves !

II

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence ;
Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre ;
Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire :

THE LOST LEADER

Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!
Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!
There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,
Never glad confident morning again!
Best fight on well, for we taught him—strike gallantly,
Menace our heart ere we master his own;
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!

“HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX”

[16—]

I

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he ;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three ;
“Good speed!” cried the watch, as the gate-bolts
undrew ;
“Speed!” echoed the wall to us galloping through ;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

II

Not a word to each other ; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing
our place ;
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique
right,
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

III

'T was moonset at starting ; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear ;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see ;
At Düffeld, 't was morning as plain as could be ;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the
half-chime,
So, Joris broke silence with, “Yet there is time !”

FROM GHENT TO AIX

IV

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one,
To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray :

V

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear
bent back
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his
track ;
And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that
glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance !
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and
anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

VI

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, "Stay
spur !
"Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault 's not in
her,
"We 'll remember at Aix"—for one heard the
quick wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering
knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

DRAMATIC LYRICS

VII

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky ;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble
like chaff ;
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

VIII

"How they 'll greet us!"—and all in a moment
his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone ;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

IX

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without
peer ;
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise,
bad or good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

X

And all I remember is—friends flocking round
As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground ;
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of
wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good
news from Ghent.

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-KADR

I

As I ride, as I ride,
With a full heart for my guide,
So its tide rocks my side,
As I ride, as I ride,
That, as I were double-eyed,
He, in whom our Tribes confide,
Is descried, ways untried
As I ride, as I ride.

II

As I ride, as I ride
To our Chief and his Allied,
Who dares chide my heart's pride
As I ride, as I ride?
Or are witnesses denied—
Through the desert waste and wide
Do I glide unespied
As I ride, as I ride?

III

As I ride, as I ride,
When an inner voice has cried,
The sands slide, nor abide
(As I ride, as I ride)

DRAMATIC LYRICS

O'er each visioned homicide
That came vaunting (has he lied?)
To reside—where he died,
As I ride, as I ride.

IV

As I ride, as I ride,
Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,
Yet his hide, streaked and pied,
As I ride, as I ride,
Shows where sweat has sprung and dried,
—Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—
How has vied stride with stride
As I ride, as I ride !

V

As I ride, as I ride,
Could I loose what Fate has tied,
Ere I pried, she should hide
(As I ride, as I ride)
All that 's meant me—satisfied
When the Prophet and the Bride
Stop veins I 'd have subside
As I ride, as I ride !

NATIONALITY IN DRINKS

I

My heart sank with our Claret-flask,
Just now, beneath the heavy sedges
That serve this pond's black face for mask ;
And still at yonder broken edges
O' the hole, where up the bubbles glisten,
After my heart I look and listen.

II

Our laughing little flask, compelled
Thro' depth to depth more bleak and shady ;
As when, both arms beside her held,
Feet straightened out, some gay French lady
Is caught up from life's light and motion,
And dropped into death's silent ocean !

Up jumped Tokay on our table,
Like a pygmy castle-warder,
Dwarfish to see, but stout and able,
Arms and accoutrements all in order ;
And fierce he looked North, then, wheeling
South,
Blew with his bugle a challenge to Drouth,
Cocked his flap-hat with the tosspot-feather,
Twisted his thumb in his red moustache,
Jingled his huge brass spurs together,

DRAMATIC LYRICS

Tightened his waist with its Buda sash,
And then, with an impudence nought could abash,
Shrugged his hump-shoulder, to tell the beholder,
For twenty such knaves he should laugh but the
bolder :

And so, with his sword-hilt gallantly jutting,
And dexter-hand on his haunch abutting,
Went the little man, Sir Ausbruch, strutting !

Here 's to Nelson's memory !
'T is the second time that I, at sea,
Right off Cape Trafalgar here,
Have drunk it deep in British Beer.
Nelson for ever—any time
Am I his to command in prose or rhyme !
Give me of Nelson only a touch,
And I save it, be it little or much :
Here 's one our Captain gives, and so
Down at the word, by George, shall it go !
He says that at Greenwich they point the beholder
To Nelson's coat, " still with tar on the shoulder :
" For he used to lean with one shoulder digging,
" Jigging, as it were, and zig-zag-zigging
" Up against the mizen-rigging !"

GARDEN FANCIES

I.—THE FLOWER'S NAME

I

HERE's the garden she walked across,
Arm in my arm, such a short while since :
Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss
Hinders the hinges and makes them wince !
She must have reached this shrub ere she turned, 5
As back with that murmur the wicket swung ;
For she laid the poor snail, my chance foot spurned,
To feed and forget it the leaves among.

II

Down this side of the gravel-walk
She went while her robe's edge brushed the box : 10
And here she paused in her gracious talk
To point me a moth on the milk-white phlox.
Roses, ranged in valiant row,
I will never think that she passed you by !
She loves you noble roses, I know ; 15
But yonder, see, where the rock-plants lie !

III

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,
Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its claim ;
Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,
Its soft meandering Spanish name : 20

DRAMATIC LYRICS

What a name ! Was it love or praise ?
Speech half-asleep or song half-awake ?
I must learn Spanish, one of these days,
Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

IV

Roses, if I live and do well, 25
I may bring her, one of these days,
To fix you fast with as fine a spell,
Fit you each with his Spanish phrase ;
But do not detain me now ; for she lingers
There, like sunshine over the ground, 30
And ever I see her soft white fingers
Searching after the bud she found.

V

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow not,
Stay as you are and be loved for ever !
Bud, if I kiss you 't is that you blow not : 35
Mind, the shut pink mouth opens never !
For while it pouts, her fingers wrestle,
Twinkling the audacious leaves between,
Till round they turn and down they nestle—
Is not the dear mark still to be seen ? 40

VI

Where I find her not, beauties vanish ;
Whither I follow her, beauties flee ;
Is there no method to tell her in Spanish
June's twice June since she breathed it with me ?
Come, bud, show me the least of her traces, 45
Treasure my lady's lightest footfall !
—Ah, you may flout and turn up your faces—
Roses, you are not so fair after all !

GARDEN FANCIES

II.—SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS

I

Plague take all your pedants, say I !
He who wrote what I hold in my hand, 50
Centuries back was so good as to die,
Leaving this rubbish to cumber the land ;
This, that was a book in its time,
Printed on paper and bound in leather,
Last month in the white of a matin-prime 55
Just when the birds sang all together.

II

Into the garden I brought it to read,
And under the arbut and laurustine
Read it, so help me grace in my need,
From title-page to closing line. 60
Chapter on chapter did I count,
As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge ;
Added up the mortal amount ;
And then proceeded to my revenge.

III

Yonder 's a plum-tree with a crevice 65
An owl would build in, were he but sage ;
For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis
In a castle of the Middle Age,
Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber ;
When he 'd be private, there might he spend 70
Hours alone in his lady's chamber :
Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

DRAMATIC LYRICS

IV

Splash, went he, as under he ducked,
—At the bottom, I knew, rain-drippings stag-
nate :
Next, a handful of blossoms I plucked 75
To bury him with, my bookshelf's magnate ;
Then I went in-doors, brought out a loaf,
Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis ;
Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf
Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais. 80

V

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss
And gum that locked our friend in limbo,
A spider had spun his web across,
And sat in the midst with arms akimbo :
So, I took pity, for learning's sake, 85
And, *de profundis, accentibus lætis*,
Cantate! quoth I, as I got a rake ;
And up I fished his delectable treatise.

VI

Here you have it, dry in the sun,
With all the binding all of a blister, 90
And great blue spots where the ink has run,
And reddish streaks that wink and glister
O'er the page so beautifully yellow :
Oh, well have the droppings played their tricks!
Did he guess how toadstools grow, this fellow? 95
Here 's one stuck in his chapter six !

GARDEN FANCIES

VII

How did he like it when the live creatures
Tickled and toused and browsed him all over,
And worm, slug, eft, with serious features,
Came in, each one, for his right of trover? 100
—When the water-beetle with great blind deaf face
Made of her eggs the stately deposit,
And the newt borrowed just so much of the preface
As tiled in the top of his black wife's closet?

VIII

All that life and fun and romping, 105
All that frisking and twisting and coupling,
Whileslowlyourpoorfriend'sleaveswereswamping
And clasps were cracking and covers suppling!
As if you had carried sour John Knox
To the play-house at Paris, Vienna or Munich, 110
Fastened him into a front-row box,
And danced off the ballet with trousers and tunic.

IX

Come, old martyr! What, torment enough is it?
Back to my room shall you take your sweet self.
Good-bye, mother-beetle; husband-*eft*, *sufficit!* 115
See the snug niche I have made on my shelf!
A.'s book shall prop you up, B.'s shall cover you,
Here's C. to be grave with, or D. to be gay,
And with E. on each side, and F. right over you,
Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-day! 120

SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER

I

GR-R-R—there go, my heart's abhorrence !
Water your damned flower-pots, do !
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
God's blood, would not mine kill you !
What ? your myrtle-bush wants trimming ?
Oh, that rose has prior claims—
Needs its leaden vase filled brimming ?
Hell dry you up with its flames !

II

At the meal we sit together :
Salve tibi ! I must hear
Wise talk of the kind of weather,
Sort of season, time of year :
Not a plenteous cork-crop : scarcely
Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt :
What 's the Latin name for "parsley" ?
What 's the Greek name for Swine's Snout ?

III

Whew ! We 'll have our platter burnished,
Laid with care on our own shelf !
With a fire-new spoon we 're furnished,
And a goblet for ourself,

SOLILOQUY OF SPANISH CLOISTER

Rinsed like something sacrificial
Ere 't is fit to touch our chaps—
Marked with L. for our initial!
(He-he! There his lily snaps!)

IV

Saint, forsooth! While brown Dolores
Squats outside the Convent bank
With Sanchicha, telling stories,
Steeping tresses in the tank,
Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,
—Can't I see his dead eye glow,
Bright as 't were a Barbary corsair's?
(That is, if he 'd let it show!)

V

When he finishes refection,
Knife and fork he never lays
Cross-wise, to my recollection,
As do I, in Jesu's praise.
I the Trinity illustrate,
Drinking watered orange-pulp—
In three sips the Arian frustrate;
While he drains his at one gulp.

VI

Oh, those melons? If he 's able
We 're to have a feast! so nice!
One goes to the Abbot's table,
All of us get each a slice.
How go on your flowers? None double?
Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
Strange!—And I, too, at such trouble,
Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

DRAMATIC LYRICS

VII

There 's a great text in Galatians,
Once you trip on it, entails
Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
One sure, if another fails :
If I trip him just a-dying,
Sure of heaven as sure can be,
Spin him round and send him flying
Off to hell, a Manichee ?

VIII

Or, my scrofulous French novel
On grey paper with blunt type !
Simply glance at it, you grovel
Hand and foot in Belial's gripe :
If I double down its pages
At the woeful sixteenth print,
When he gathers his greengages,
Ope a sieve and slip it in 't ?

IX

Or, there 's Satan !—one might venture
Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
Such a flaw in the indenture
As he 'd miss till, past retrieve,
Blasted lay that rose-acacia
We 're so proud of ! *Hy, Zy, Hine . . .*
'St, there 's Vespers ! *Plena gratiâ*
Ave, Virgo ! Gr-r-r—you swine !

THE LABORATORY

ANCIEN RÉGIME

I

Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,
May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling whitely,
As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's-smithy—
Which is the poison to poison her, prithee?

II

He is with her, and they know that I know
Where they are, what they do : they believe my
tears flow
While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to the
dear
Empty church, to pray God in, for them !—I am
here.

III

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,
Pound at thy powder,—I am not in haste !
Better sit thus, and observe thy strange things,
Than go where men wait me and dance at the
King's.

IV

That in the mortar—you call it a gum ?
Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings come !
And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,
Sure to taste sweetly,—is that poison too ?

DRAMATIC LYRICS

V

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures,
What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures !
To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,
A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree basket !

VI

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give,
And Pauline should have just thirty minutes to live !
But to light a pastile, and Elise, with her head
And her breast and her arms and her hands,
should drop dead !

VII

Quick—is it finished ? The colour 's too grim !
Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and dim ?
Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and stir,
And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer !

VIII

What a drop ! She 's not little, no minion like me !
That 's why she ensnared him : this never will free
The soul from those masculine eyes,—say, “no !”
To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.

IX

For only last night, as they whispered, I brought
My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought
Could I keep them one half minute fixed, she
would fall
Shrivelled ; she fell not ; yet this does it all !

THE LABORATORY

X

Not that I bid you spare her the pain ;
Let death be felt and the proof remain :
Brand, burn up, bite into its grace—
He is sure to remember her dying face !

XI

Is it done? Take my mask off! Nay, be not
morose ;
It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close :
The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's fee !
If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me ?

XII

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill,
You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if you
will !
But brush this dust off me, lest horror it brings
Ere I know it—next moment I dance at the King's !

THE CONFESSIONAL

[SPAIN]

I

It is a lie—their Priests, their Pope,
Their Saints, their . . . all they fear or hope
Are lies, and lies—there! through my door
And ceiling, there! and walls and floor,
There, lies, they lie—shall still be hurled
Till spite of them I reach the world!

II

You think Priests just and holy men!
Before they put me in this den
I was a human creature too,
With flesh and blood like one of you,
A girl that laughed in beauty's pride
Like lilies in your world outside.

III

I had a lover—shame avaunt!
This poor wrenched body, grim and gaunt,
Was kissed all over till it burned,
By lips the truest, love e'er turned
His heart's own tint: one night they kissed
My soul out in a burning mist.

THE CONFESSIONAL

IV

So, next day when the accustomed train
Of things grew round my sense again,
“That is a sin,” I said : and slow
With downcast eyes to church I go,
And pass to the confession-chair,
And tell the old mild father there.

V

But when I falter Beltran’s name,
“Ha ?” quoth the father ; “much I blame
“The sin ; yet wherefore idly grieve ?
“Despair not—strenuously retrieve !
“Nay, I will turn this love of thine
“To lawful love, almost divine ;

VI

“For he is young, and led astray,
“This Beltran, and he schemes, men say,
“To change the laws of church and state ;
“So, thine shall be an angel’s fate,
“Who, ere the thunder breaks, should roll
“Its cloud away and save his soul.

VII

“For, when he lies upon thy breast,
“Thou mayst demand and be possessed
“Of all his plans, and next day steal
“To me, and all those plans reveal,
“That I and every priest, to purge
“His soul, may fast and use the scourge.”

DRAMATIC LYRICS

VIII

That father's beard was long and white,
With love and truth his brow seemed bright ;
I went back, all on fire with joy,
And, that same evening, bade the boy
Tell me, as lovers should, heart-free,
Something to prove his love of me.

IX

He told me what he would not tell
For hope of heaven or fear of hell ;
And I lay listening in such pride !
And, soon as he had left my side,
Tripped to the church by morning-light
To save his soul in his despite.

X

I told the father all his schemes,
Who were his comrades, what their dreams ;
“ And now make haste,” I said, “ to pray
“ The one spot from his soul away ;
“ To-night he comes, but not the same
“ Will look ! ” At night he never came.

XI

Nor next night : on the after-morn,
I went forth with a strength new-born.
The church was empty ; something drew
My steps into the street ; I knew
It led me to the market-place :
Where, lo, on high, the father's face !

THE CONFESSIONAL

XII

That horrible black scaffold dressed,
That stapled block . . . God sink the rest !
That head strapped back, that blinding vest,
Those knotted hands and naked breast,
Till near one busy hangman pressed,
And, on the neck these arms caressed . . .

XIII

No part in aught they hope or fear !
No heaven with them, no hell !—and here,
No earth, not so much space as pens
My body in their worst of dens
But shall bear God and man my cry,
Lies—lies, again—and still, they lie !

CRISTINA

I

SHE should never have looked at me
If she meant I should not love her !
There are plenty . . . men, you call such,
I suppose . . . she may discover
All her soul to, if she pleases,
And yet leave much as she found them :
But I 'm not so, and she knew it
When she fixed me, glancing round them.

II

What? To fix me thus meant nothing?
But I can't tell (there 's my weakness)
What her look said !—no vile cant, sure,
About “need to strew the bleakness
“Of some lone shore with its pearl-seed,
“That the sea feels”—no “strange yearning
“That such souls have, most to lavish
“Where there 's chance of least returning.”

III

Oh, we 're sunk enough here, God knows !
But not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,
When the spirit's true endowments

CRISTINA

Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing.

IV

There are flashes struck from midnights,
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,
Whereby piled-up honours perish,
Whereby swollen ambitions dwindle,
While just this or that poor impulse,
Which for once had play unstifled,
Seems the sole work of a life-time
That away the rest have trifled.

V

Doubt you if, in some such moment,
As she fixed me, she felt clearly,
Ages past the soul existed,
Here an age 't is resting merely,
And hence fleets again for ages,
While the true end, sole and single,
It stops here for is, this love-way,
With some other soul to mingle?

VI

Else it loses what it lived for,
And eternally must lose it;
Better ends may be in prospect,
Deeper blisses (if you choose it),
But this life's end and this love-bliss
Have been lost here. Doubt you whether
This she felt as, looking at me,
Mine and her souls rushed together?

DRAMATIC LYRICS

VII

Oh, observe ! Of course, next moment,
The world's honours, in derision,
Trampled out the light for ever :
Never fear but there 's provision
Of the devil's to quench knowledge
Lest we walk the earth in rapture !
—Making those who catch God's secret
Just so much more prize their capture !

VIII

Such am I : the secret 's mine now !
She has lost me, I have gained her ;
Her soul 's mine : and thus, grown perfect,
I shall pass my life's remainder.
Life will just hold out the proving
Both our powers, alone and blended :
And then, come the next life quickly !
This world's use will have been ended.

THE LOST MISTRESS

I

ALL 's over, then : does truth sound bitter
As one at first believes ?
Hark, 't is the sparrows' good-night twitter
About your cottage eaves !

II

And the leaf-buds on the vine are woolly,
I noticed that, to-day ;
One day more bursts them open fully
—You know the red turns grey.

III

To-morrow we meet the same then, dearest ?
May I take your hand in mine ?
Mere friends are we,—well, friends the merest
Keep much that I resign :

IV

For each glance of the eye so bright and black,
Though I keep with heart's endeavour,—
Your voice, when you wish the snowdrops back,
Though it stay in my soul for ever !—

V

Yet I will but say what mere friends say,
Or only a thought stronger ;
I will hold your hand but as long as all may,
Or so very little longer !

EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES

FAME

SEE, as the prettiest graves will do in time,
Our poet's wants the freshness of its prime ;
Spite of the sexton's browsing horse, the sods
Have struggled through its binding osier rods ;
Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean awry,
Wanting the brick-work promised by-and-by ;
How the minute grey lichens, plate o'er plate,
Have softened down the crisp-cut name and date!

LOVE

So, the year 's done with !
 (*Love me for ever !*)
All March begun with,
 April's endeavour ;
May-wreaths that bound me
 June needs must sever ;
Now snows fall round me,
 Quenching June's fever—
 (*Love me for ever !*)

MEETING AT NIGHT

I

THE grey sea and the long black land ;
And the yellow half-moon large and low ;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

II

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach ;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears ;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears
Than the two hearts beating each to each !

PARTING AT MORNING

ROUND the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain's rim
And straight was a path of gold for him,
And the need of a world of men for me.

SONG

I

NAY but you, who do not love her,
Is she not pure gold, my mistress?
Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her?
Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
And this last fairest tress of all,
So fair, see, ere I let it fall?

II

Because, you spend your lives in praising;
To praise, you search the wide world over:
Then why not witness, calmly gazing,
If earth holds aught—speak truth—above her?
Above this tress, and this, I touch
But cannot praise, I love so much!

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD

I

LET'S contend no more, Love,
Strive nor weep :
All be as before, Love,
—Only sleep !

II

What so wild as words are ?
I and thou
In debate, as birds are,
Hawk on bough !

III

See the creature stalking
While we speak !
Hush and hide the talking,
Cheek on cheek !

IV

What so false as truth is,
False to thee ?
Where the serpent's tooth is
Shun the tree—

V

Where the apple reddens
Never pry—
Lest we lose our Edens,
Eve and I.

DRAMATIC LYRICS

VI

Be a god and hold me
With a charm !
Be a man and fold me
With thine arm !

VII

Teach me, only teach, Love !
As I ought
I will speak thy speech, Love
Think thy thought—

VIII

Meet, if thou require it,
Both demands,
Laying flesh and spirit
In thy hands.

IX

That shall be to-morrow,
Not to-night :
I must bury sorrow
Out of sight :

X

—Must a little weep, Love,
(Foolish me !)
And so fall asleep, Love,
Loved by thee.

EVELYN HOPE

I

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead !

Sit and watch by her side an hour.
That is her book-shelf, this her bed ;
She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,
Beginning to die too, in the glass ;
Little has yet been changed, I think :
The shutters are shut, no light may pass
Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.

II

Sixteen years old when she died !
Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name ;
It was not her time to love ; beside,
Her life had many a hope and aim,
Duties enough and little cares,
And now was quiet, now astir,
Till God's hand beckoned unawares, —
And the sweet white brow is all of her.

III

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope ?
What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
Made you of spirit, fire and dew—

DRAMATIC LYRICS

And, just because I was thrice as old
And our paths in the world diverged so wide,
Each was nought to each, must I be told?
We were fellow mortals, nought beside?

IV

No, indeed! for God above
Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
And creates the love to reward the love:
I claim you still, for my own love's sake!
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few:
Much is to learn, much to forget
Ere the time be come for taking you.

V

But the time will come,—at last it will,
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)
In the lower earth, in the years long still,
That body and soul so pure and gay?
Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
And your mouth of your own geranium's red—
And what you would do with me, in fine,
In the new life come in the old one's stead.

VI

I have lived (I shall say) so much since then,
Given up myself so many times,
Gained me the gains of various men,
Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;
Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
Either I missed or itself missed me:
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope!
What is the issue? let us see!

EVELYN HOPE

VII

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while.

My heart seemed full as it could hold ?

There was place and to spare for the frank young
smile,

And the red young mouth, and the hair's young
gold.

So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep :

See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand !

There, that is our secret : go to sleep !

You will wake, and remember, and understand.

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

I

WHERE the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep
Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop—
Was the site once of a city great and gay,
(So they say)
Of our country's very capital, its prince
Ages since
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war.

II

Now,—the country does not even boast a tree
As you see,
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
From the hills
Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
Into one)
Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
Up like fires
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,
Twelve abreast.

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

III

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
 Never was !
Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads
 And embeds
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
 Stock or stone—
Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
 Long ago ;
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
 Struck them tame ;
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
 Bought and sold.

IV

Now,—the single little turret that remains
 On the plains,
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
 Overscored,
While the patching houseleek's head of blossom
 winks
 Through the chinks—
Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
 Sprang sublime,
And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced
 As they raced,
And the monarch and his minions and his dames
 Viewed the games.

V

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured eve
 Smiles to leave
To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
 In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished grey
 Melt away—

DRAMATIC LYRICS

That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
 Waits me there
In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
 For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks now,
 breathless, dumb
 Till I come.

VI

But he looked upon the city, every side,
 Far and wide,
All the mountains topped with temples, all the
 glades'
 Colonnades,
All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and then,
 All the men !
When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,
 Either hand
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
 Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
 Each on each.

VII

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
 South and North,
And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
 As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—
 Gold, of course.
Oh heart ! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns !
 Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin !
 Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!
 Love is best.

A LOVERS' QUARREL

I

OH, what a dawn of day !
How the March sun feels like May !
 All is blue again
 After last night's rain,
And the South dries the hawthorn-spray. 5
 Only, my Love 's away !
I 'd as lief that the blue were grey.

II

Runnels, which rillels swell,
Must be dancing down the dell,
 With a foaming head 10
 On the beryl bed
Paven smooth as a hermit's cell ;
 Each with a tale to tell,
Could my Love but attend as well.

III

Dearest, three months ago ! 15
When we lived blocked-up with snow,—
 When the wind would edge
 In and in his wedge,
In, as far as the point could go—
 Not to our ingle, though, 20
Where we loved each the other so !

DRAMATIC LYRICS

IV

Laughs with so little cause !
We devised games out of straws.
 We would try and trace
 One another's face 25
In the ash, as an artist draws ;
 Free on each other's flaws,
How we chattered like two church daws !

V

What 's in the " Times " ?—a scold
At the Emperor deep and cold ; 30
 He has taken a bride
 To his gruesome side,
That 's as fair as himself is bold :
 There they sit ermine-stoled,
And she powders her hair with gold. 35

VI

Fancy the Pampas' sheen !
Miles and miles of gold and green
 Where the sunflowers blow
 In a solid glow,
And—to break now and then the screen— 40
 Black neck and eyeballs keen,
Up a wild horse leaps between !

VII

Try, will our table turn ?
Lay your hands there light, and yearn
 Till the yearning slips 45
 Thro' the finger-tips
In a fire which a few discern,
 And a very few feel burn,
And the rest, they may live and learn !

A LOVERS' QUARREL

VIII

Then we would up and pace, 50
For a change, about the place,
 Each with arm o'er neck :
 'T is our quarter-deck,
We are seamen in woeful case.
 Help in the ocean-space ! 55
Or, if no help, we 'll embrace.

IX

See, how she looks now, dressed
In a sleding-cap and vest !
 'T is a huge fur cloak—
 Like a reindeer's yoke 60
Falls the lappet along the breast :
 Sleeves for her arms to rest,
Or to hang, as my Love likes best.

X

Teach me to flirt a fan
As the Spanish ladies can, 65
 Or I tint your lip
 With a burnt stick's tip
And you turn into such a man !
 Just the two spots that span
Half the bill of the young male swan. 70

XI

Dearest, three months ago
When the mesmerizer Snow
 With his hand's first sweep
 Put the earth to sleep :
'T was a time when the heart could show 75
 All—how was earth to know,
'Neath the mute hand's to-and-fro ?

DRAMATIC LYRICS

XII

Dearest, three months ago
When we loved each other so,
 Lived and loved the same 80
 Till an evening came
When a shaft from the devil's bow
 Pierced to our ingle-glow,
And the friends were friend and foe !

XIII

Not from the heart beneath— 85
'T was a bubble born of breath,
 Neither sneer nor vaunt,
 Nor reproach nor taunt.
See a word, how it severeth !
 Oh, power of life and death 90
In the tongue, as the Preacher saith !

XIV

Woman, and will you cast
For a word, quite off at last
 Me, your own, your You,—
 Since, as truth is true, 95
I was You all the happy past—
 Me do you leave aghast
With the memories We amassed ?

XV

Love, if you knew the light
That your soul casts in my sight, 100
 How I look to you
 For the pure and true
And the beauteous and the right,—
 Bear with a moment's spite
When a mere mote threatens the white ! 105

A LOVERS' QUARREL

XVI

What of a hasty word ?
Is the fleshly heart not stirred
 By a worm's pin-prick
 Where its roots are quick ?
See the eye, by a fly's foot blurred— 110
 Ear, when a straw is heard
Scratch the brain's coat of curd !

XVII

Foul be the world or fair
More or less, how can I care ?
 'T is the world the same 115
 For my praise or blame,
And endurance is easy there.
 Wrong in the one thing rare—
Oh, it is hard to bear !

XVIII

Here 's the spring back or close, 120
When the almond-blossom blows :
 We shall have the word
 In a minor third
There is none but the cuckoo knows :
 Heaps of the guelder-rose ! 125
I must bear with it, I suppose.

XIX

Could but November come,
Were the noisy birds struck dumb
 At the warning slash
 Of his driver's-lash— 130
I would laugh like the valiant Thumb
 Facing the castle glum
And the giant's fee-faw-fum !

DRAMATIC LYRICS

XX

Then, were the world well stripped
Of the gear wherein equipped 135
 We can stand apart,
 Heart dispense with heart
In the sun, with the flowers unnipped,—
 Oh, the world's hangings ripped,
We were both in a bare-walled crypt ! 140

XXI

Each in the crypt would cry
“ But one freezes here ! and why ?
 “ When a heart, as chill,
 “ At my own would thrill
“ Back to life, and its fires out-fly ? 145
 “ Heart, shall we live or die ?
“ The rest, . . . settle by-and-by ! ”

XXII

So she 'd efface the score,
And forgive me as before.
 It is twelve o'clock : 150
 I shall hear her knock
In the worst of a storm's uproar,
 I shall pull her through the door,
I shall have her for evermore !

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON
OF QUALITY)

I

HAD I but plenty of money, money enough and
to spare,
The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the
city-square ;
Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the
window there !

II

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to
hear, at least !
There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect
feast ;
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no
more than a beast.

III

Well now, look at our villa ! stuck like the horn
of a bull
Just on a mountain-edge as bare as the creature's
skull,
Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to
pull !
—I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the
hair 's turned wool.

DRAMATIC LYRICS

IV

But the city, oh the city—the square with the
houses! Why?
They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there 's
something to take the eye!
Houses in four straight lines, not a single front
awry;
You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters,
who hurries by;
Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when
the sun gets high;
And the shops with fanciful signs which are
painted properly.

V

What of a villa? Though winter be over in
March by rights,
'T is May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered
well off the heights:
You've the brown ploughed land before, where
the oxen steam and wheeze,
And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint
grey olive-trees.

VI

Is it better in May, I ask you? You've summer
all at once;
In a day he leaps complete with a few strong
April suns.
'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen
three fingers well,
The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its
great red bell
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children
to pick and sell.

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY

VII

Is it ever hot in the square? There 's a fountain
to spout and splash!
In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine
such foam-bows flash
On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance
and paddle and pash
Round the lady atop in her conch—fifty gazers
do not abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds round
her waist in a sort of sash.

VIII

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see
though you linger,
Except yon cypress that points like death's lean
lifted forefinger.
Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix i' the
corn and mingle,
Or thrud the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem
a-tingle.
Late August or early September, the stunning
cicala is shrill,
And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the
resinous firs on the hill.
Enough of the seasons,—I spare you the months
of the fever and chill.

IX

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the blessed
church-bells begin:
No sooner the bells leave off than the diligence
rattles in:
You get the pick of the news, and it costs you
never a pin.

DRAMATIC LYRICS

By-and-by there 's the travelling doctor gives pills,
lets blood, draws teeth ;
Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market
beneath.
At the post-office such a scene-picture—the new
play, piping hot !
And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal
thieves were shot.
Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly
of rebukes,
And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some
little new law of the Duke's !
Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend
Don So-and-so
Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome
and Cicero,
“ And moreover,” (the sonnet goes rhyming,) “ the
skirts of Saint Paul has reached,
“ Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more
unctuous than ever he preached.”
Noon strikes,—here sweeps the procession ! our
Lady borne smiling and smart
With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven
swords stuck in her heart !
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle*
the fife ;
No keeping one's haunches still : it 's the greatest
pleasure in life.

x

But bless you, it 's dear—it 's dear ! fowls, wine, at
double the rate.
They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what
oil pays passing the gate
It 's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me,
not the city !

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY

Beggars can scarcely be choosers : but still—ah,
the pity, the pity !

Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks
with cowls and sandals,

And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-hold-
ing the yellow candles ;

One, he carries a flag up straight, and another
a cross with handles,

And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the
better prevention of scandals :

Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle*
the fife.

Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such
pleasure in life !

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S

I

OH Galuppi, Baldassarò, this is very sad to find !
I can hardly misconceive you ; it would prove me
deaf and blind ;
But although I take your meaning, 't is with such
a heavy mind !

II

Here you come with your old music, and here 's
all the good it brings.
What, they lived once thus at Venice where the
merchants were the kings,
Where Saint Mark's is, where the Doges used to
wed the sea with rings ?

III

Ay, because the sea 's the street there ; and 't is
arched by . . . what you call
. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it, where
they kept the carnival :
I was never out of England—it 's as if I saw it all.

IV

Did young people take their pleasure when the
sea was warm in May ?
Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever
to mid-day,
When they made up fresh adventures for the
morrow, do you say ?

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S

V

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and lips
so red,—
On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bell-
flower on its bed,
O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man
might base his head?

VI

Well, and it was graceful of them—they 'd break
talk off and afford
—She, to bite her mask's black velvet—he, to
finger on his sword,
While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the
clavichord?

VII

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths
diminished, sigh on sigh,
Told them something? Those suspensions, those
solutions—"Must we die?"
Those commiserating sevenths—"Life might last!
we can but try!"

VIII

"Were you happy?"—"Yes."—"And are you
still as happy?"—"Yes. And you?"
—"Then, more kisses!"—"Did *I* stop them,
when a million seemed so few?"
Hark, the dominant's persistence till it must be
answered to!

DRAMATIC LYRICS

IX

So, an octave struck the answer. Oh, they praised
you, I dare say !
“ Brave Galuppi ! that was music ! good alike at
grave and gay !
“ I can always leave off talking when I hear a
master play ! ”

X

Then they left you for their pleasure : till in due
time, one by one,
Some with lives that came to nothing, some with
deeds as well undone,
Death stepped tacitly and took them where they
never see the sun.

XI

But when I sit down to reason, think to take my
stand nor swerve,
While I triumph o'er a secret wrung from nature's
close reserve,
In you come with your cold music till I creep thro'
every nerve.

XII

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a
house was burned :
“ Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Venice
spent what Venice earned.
“ The soul, doubtless, is immortal—where a soul
can be discerned.

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S

XIII

“Yours for instance : you know physics, something of geology,
“Mathematics are your pastime ; souls shall rise in their degree ;
“Butterflies may dread extinction,—you ’ll not die, it cannot be !

XIV

“As for Venice and her people, merely born to bloom and drop,
“Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly were the crop :
“What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had to stop ?

XV

“Dust and ashes !” So you creak it, and I want the heart to scold.
Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what ’s become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms ? I feel chilly and grown old.

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE

I

THE morn when first it thunders in March,
The eel in the pond gives a leap, they say :
As I leaned and looked over the aloed arch
Of the villa-gate this warm March day,
No flash snapped, no dumb thunder rolled 5
In the valley beneath where, white and wide
And washed by the morning water-gold,
Florence lay out on the mountain-side.

II

River and bridge and street and square
Lay mine, as much at my beck and call, 10
Through the live translucent bath of air,
As the sights in a magic crystal ball.
And of all I saw and of all I praised,
The most to praise and the best to see
Was the startling bell-tower Giotto raised : 15
But why did it more than startle me ?

III

Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,
Could you play me false who loved you so ?
Some slights if a certain heart endures
Yet it feels, I would have your fellows know ! 20
I' faith, I perceive not why I should care
To break a silence that suits them best,
But the thing grows somewhat hard to bear
When I find a Giotto join the rest.

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE

IV

On the arch where olives overhead 25
Print the blue sky with twig and leaf,
(That sharp-curved leaf which they never shed)
'Twixt the aloes, I used to lean in chief,
And mark through the winter afternoons,
By a gift God grants me now and then, 30
In the mild decline of those suns like moons,
Who walked in Florence, besides her men.

V

They might chirp and chaffer, come and go
For pleasure or profit, her men alive—
My business was hardly with them, I trow, 35
But with empty cells of the human hive;
—With the chapter-room, the cloister-porch,
The church's apsis, aisle or nave,
Its crypt, one fingers along with a torch,
Its face set full for the sun to shave. 40

VI

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,
Wherever an outline weakens and wanes
Till the latest life in the painting stops,
Stands One whom each fainter pulse-tick pains:
One, wishful each scrap should clutch the brick, 45
Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,
—A lion who dies of an ass's kick,
The wronged great soul of an ancient Master.

VII

For oh, this world and the wrong it does!
They are safe in heaven with their backs to it, 50
The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum and buzz
Round the works of, you of the little wit!

DRAMATIC LYRICS

Do their eyes contract to the earth's old scope,
Now that they see God face to face,
And have all attained to be poets, I hope? 55
'T is their holiday now, in any case.

VIII

Much they reckon of your praise and you!
But the wronged great souls—can they be quit
Of a world where their work is all to do,
Where you style them, you of the little wit, 60
Old Master This and Early the Other,
Not dreaming that Old and New are fellows:
A younger succeeds to an elder brother,
Da Vincis derive in good time from Dellos.

IX

And here where your praise might yield returns, 65
And a handsome word or two give help,
Here, after your kind, the mastiff grins
And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.
What, not a word for Stefano there,
Of brow once prominent and starry, 70
Called Nature's Ape and the world's despair
For his peerless painting? (See Vasari.)

X

There stands the Master. Study, my friends,
What a man's work comes to! So he plans it,
Performs it, perfects it, makes amends 75
For the toiling and moiling, and then, *sic transit!*
Happier the thrifty blind-folk labour,
With upturned eye while the hand is busy,
Not sidling a glance at the coin of their neighbour!
'T is looking downward that makes one dizzy. 80

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE

XI

"If you knew their work you would deal your
dole."

May I take upon me to instruct you?
When Greek Art ran and reached the goal,
Thus much had the world to boast *in fructu*—
The Truth of Man, as by God first spoken, 85
Which the actual generations garble,
Was re-uttered, and Soul (which Limbs betoken)
And Limbs (Soul informs) made new in marble.

XII

So, you saw yourself as you wished you were,
As you might have been, as you cannot be; 90
Earth here, rebuked by Olympus there:
And grew content in your poor degree
With your little power, by those statues' god-
head,
And your little scope, by their eyes' full sway,
And your little grace, by their grace embodied, 95
And your little date, by their forms that stay.

XIII

You would fain be kinglier, say, than I am?
Even so, you will not sit like Theseus.
You would prove a model? The Son of Priam
Has yet the advantage in arms' and knees'
use. 100
You 're wroth—can you slay your snake like
Apollo?
You 're grieved—still Niobe 's the grander!
You live—there 's the Racers' frieze to follow:
You die—there 's the dying Alexander.

DRAMATIC LYRICS

XIV

So, testing your weakness by their strength, 105
Your meagre charms by their rounded beauty,
Measured by Art in your breadth and length,
You learned—to submit is a mortal's duty.
—When I say “you” ’t is the common soul,
The collective, I mean : the race of Man 110
That receives life in parts to live in a whole,
And grow here according to God's clear plan.

XV

Growth came when, looking your last on them
all,
You turned your eyes inwardly one fine day
And cried with a start—What if we so small 115
Be greater and grander the while than they?
Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature?
In both, of such lower types are we
Precisely because of our wider nature ;
For time, theirs—ours, for eternity. 120

XVI

To-day's brief passion limits their range ;
It seethes with the morrow for us and more.
They are perfect—how else? they shall never
change :
We are faulty—why not? we have time in
store.
The Artificer's hand is not arrested 125
With us ; we are rough-hewn, nowise polished :
They stand for our copy, and, once invested
With all they can teach, we shall see them
abolished.

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE

XVII

'T is a life-long toil till our lump be leaven—
The better! What 's come to perfection
perishes. 130
Things learned on earth, we shall practise in
heaven :
Works done least rapidly, Art most cherishes.
Thyself shalt afford the example, Giotto !
Thy one work, not to decrease or diminish,
Done at a stroke, was just (was it not ?) " O ! " 135
Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

XVIII

Is it true that we are now, and shall be hereafter,
But what and where depend on life's minute ?
Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter
Our first step out of the gulf or in it ? 140
Shall Man, such step within his endeavour,
Man's face, have no more play and action
Than joy which is crystallized for ever,
Or grief, an eternal petrification ?

XIX

On which I conclude, that the early painters, 145
To cries of "Greek Art and what more wish
you ?"—
Replied, "To become now self-acquainters,
"And paint man man, whatever the issue !
"Make new hopes shine through the flesh they
fray,
"New fears aggrandize the rags and tatters : 150
"To bring the invisible full into play !
"Let the visible go to the dogs—what matters ?"

DRAMATIC LYRICS

XX

Give these, I exhort you, their guerdon and glory
For daring so much, before they well did it.
The first of the new, in our race's story, 155
Beats the last of the old ; 't is no idle quiddit.
The worthies began a revolution,
Which if on earth you intend to acknowledge,
Why, honour them now ! (ends my allocution)
Nor conferyourdegreewhenthefolkleavecollege. 160

XXI

There 's a fancy some lean to and others hate—
That, when this life is ended, begins
New work for the soul in another state,
Where it strives and gets weary, loses and wins :
Where the strong and the weak, this world's
congeries, 165
Repeat in large what they practised in small,
Through life after life in unlimited series ;
Only the scale 's to be changed, that 's all.

XXII

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen
By the means of Evil that Good is best, 170
And, through earth and its noise, what is heaven's
serene,—
When our faith in the same has stood the test—
Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod,
The uses of labour are surely done ;
There remaineth a rest for the people of God : 175
And I have had troubles enough, for one.

XXIII

But at any rate I have loved the season
Of Art's spring-birth so dim and dewy ;
My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan,
My painter—who but Cimabue ? 180

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE

Nor ever was man of them all indeed,
From these to Ghiberti and Ghirlandajo,
Could say that he missed my critic-meed.
So, now to my special grievance—heigh ho !

XXIV

Their ghosts still stand, as I said before, 185
Watching each fresco flaked and rasped,
Blocked up, knocked out, or whitewashed o'er :
—No getting again what the church has
grasped !
The works on the wall must take their chance ;
“Works never conceded to England's thick
clime !” 190
(I hope they prefer their inheritance
Of a bucketful of Italian quick-lime.)

XXV

When they go at length, with such a shaking
Of heads o'er the old delusion, sadly
Each master his way through the black streets
taking, 195
Where many a lost work breathes though
badly—
Why don't they bethink them of who has merited ?
Why not reveal, while their pictures dree
Such doom, how a captive might be out-ferreted ?
Why is it they never remember me ? 200

XXVI

Not that I expect the great Bigordi,
Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, bellicose ;
Nor the wronged Lippino ; and not a word I
Say of a scrap of Frà Angelico's :

DRAMATIC LYRICS

But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi, 205
To grant me a taste of your intonaco,
Some Jerome that seeks the heaven with a sad eye?
Not a churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco?

XXVII

Could not the ghost with the close red cap,
My Pollajolo, the twice a craftsman, 210
Save me a sample, give me the hap
Of a muscular Christ that shows the draughts-
man?
No Virgin by him the somewhat petty,
Of finical touch and tempera crumbly—
Could not Alesso Baldovinetti 215
Contribute so much, I ask him humbly?

XXVIII

Margheritone of Arezzo,
With the grave-clothes garb and swaddling
barret
(Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,
You bald old saturnine poll-clawed parrot?) 220
Not a poor glimmering Crucifixion,
Where in the foreground kneels the donor?
If such remain, as is my conviction,
The hoarding it does you but little honour.

XXIX

They pass; for them the panels may thrill, 225
The tempera grow alive and tinglish;
Their pictures are left to the mercies still
Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the English,
Who, seeing mere money's worth in their prize,
Will sell it to somebody calm as Zeno 230
At naked High Art, and in ecstasies
Before some clay-cold vile Carlino!

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE

XXX

No matter for these ! But Giotto, you,
Have you allowed, as the town-tongues babble
it,—

Oh, never ! it shall not be counted true— 235

That a certain precious little tablet
Which Buonarroti eyed like a lover,—
Was buried so long in oblivion's womb
And, left for another than I to discover,
Turns up at last ! and to whom ?—to whom ? 240

XXXI

I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,
(Or was it rather the Ognissanti ?)
Patient on altar-step planting a weary toe !
Nay, I shall have it yet ! *Detur amanti !*
My Koh-i-noor—or (if that 's a platitude) 245
Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian Sofi's eye ;
So, in anticipative gratitude,
What if I take up my hope and prophesy ?

XXXII

When the hour grows ripe, and a certain dotard
Is pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing, 250
To the worse side of the Mont Saint Gothard,
We shall begin by way of rejoicing ;
None of that shooting the sky (blank cartridge),
Nor a civic guard, all plumes and lacquer,
Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge 255
Over Morello with squib and cracker.

XXXIII

This timewe'll shoot better game and bag'em hot—
No mere display at the stone of Dante,
But a kind of sober Witanagemot
(Ex : " Casa Guidi," *quod videas ante*) 260

DRAMATIC LYRICS

Shall ponder, once Freedom restored to Florence,
How Art may return that departed with her.
Go, hated house, go each trace of the Loraine's,
And bring us the days of Orgagna hither !

XXXIV

How we shall prologuize, how we shall perorate, 265
Utter fit things upon art and history,
Feel truth at blood-heat and falsehood at zero rate,
Make of the want of the age no mystery ;
Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,
Show—monarchy ever its uncouth cub licks 270
Out of the bear's shape into Chimæra's,
While Pure Art's birth is still the republic's.

XXXV

Then one shall propose in a speech (curt Tuscan,
Expurgate and sober, with scarcely an "*issimo*,")
To end now our half-told tale of Cambuscan, 275
And turn the bell-tower's *alt* to *altissimo* :
And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia
The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
Shall soar up in gold full fifty braccia,
Completing Florence, as Florence Italy. 280

XXXVI

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold
Is broken away, and the long-pent fire,
Like the golden hope of the world, unbaffled
Springs from its sleep, and up goes the spire
While "God and the People" plain for its motto, 285
Thence the new tricolour flaps at the sky ?
At least to foresee that glory of Giotto
And Florence together, the first am I !

“DE GUSTIBUS —”

I

Your ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
 (If our loves remain)
 In an English lane,
By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
Hark, those two in the hazel coppice—
A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
 Making love, say,—
 The happier they !
Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,
And let them pass, as they will too soon,
 With the bean-flowers' boon,
 And the blackbird's tune,
 And May, and June !

II

What I love best in all the world
Is a castle, precipice-encurled,
In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.
Or look for me, old fellow of mine,
(If I get my head from out the mouth
O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
And come again to the land of lands)—
In a sea-side house to the farther South,
Where the baked cicala dies of drouth,
And one sharp tree—'t is a cypress—stands,
By the many hundred years red-rusted,
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,

DRAMATIC LYRICS

My sentinel to guard the sands
To the water's edge. For, what expands
Before the house, but the great opaque
Blue breadth of sea without a break?
While, in the house, for ever crumbles
Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles
Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
And says there 's news to-day—the king
Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling :
—She hopes they have not caught the felons.
Italy, my Italy !
Queen Mary's saying serves for me—
 (When fortune's malice
 Lost her—Calais)—
Open my heart and you will see
Graved inside of it, "Italy."
Such lovers old are I and she :
So it always was, so shall ever be !

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

I

OH, to be in England
Now that April 's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England—now !

II

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows !
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's sedge—
That 's the wise thrush ; he sings each song twice
over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture !
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower !

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA

NOBLY, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the North-
west died away ;
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into
Cadiz Bay ;
Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar
lay ;
In the dimmest North-east distance dawned
Gibraltar grand and gray ;
“ Here and here did England help me : how can
I help England ? ”—say,
Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to
praise and pray,
While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

SAUL

I

SAID Abner, "At last thou art come! Ere I tell,
ere thou speak,

"Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished
it, and did kiss his cheek.

And he, "Since the King, O my friend, for thy
countenance sent,

"Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until
from his tent

"Thou return with the joyful assurance the King
liveth yet,

5

"Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the
water be wet.

"For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space
of three days,

"Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of
prayer nor of praise,

"To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended
their strife,

"And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks
back upon life.

10

II

"Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's
child with his dew

"On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still
living and blue

"Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as
if no wild heat

"Were now raging to torture the desert!"

DRAMATIC LYRICS

III

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on
my feet,
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent ¹⁵
was unlooped ;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I
stooped ;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all
withered and gone,
That extends to the second enclosure, I groped
my way on
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then
once more I prayed, ²⁰
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was
not afraid
But spoke, " Here is David, thy servant ! " And
no voice replied.
At the first I saw nought but the blackness ; but
soon I descried
A something more black than the blackness—the
vast, the upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion : and slow
into sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of ²⁵
all.
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof,
showed Saul.

IV

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both arms
stretched out wide
On the great cross-support in the centre, that goes
to each side ;

SAUL

He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as, caught
in his pangs
And waiting his change, the king-serpent all ³⁰
heavily hangs,
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance
come
With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul, drear
and stark, blind and dumb.

v

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies we
twine round its chords
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide—
those sunbeams like swords ! ³⁵
And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as,
one after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be
done.
They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo,
they have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water within the
stream's bed ;
And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star
follows star ⁴⁰
Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue and
so far !

vi

—Then the tune, for which quails on the cornland
will each leave his mate
To fly after the player ; then, what makes the
crickets elate
Till for boldness they fight one another : and then,
what has weight

DRAMATIC LYRICS

To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand
house—
There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird 45
and half mouse !
God made all the creatures and gave them our love
and our fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children, one
family here.

VII

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their
wine-song, when hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship,
and great hearts expand 50
And grow one in the sense of this world's life.—
And then, the last song
When the dead man is praised on his journey—
“ Bear, bear him along
“ With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets !
Are balm-seeds not here
“ To console us ? The land has none left such as
he on the bier.
“ Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother ! ”—
And then, the glad chaunt 55
Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens,
next, she whom we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—And
then, the great march
Wherein man runs to man to assist him and
buttress an arch
Nought can break ; who shall harm them, our
friends ?—Then, the chorus intoned
As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned. 60
But I stopped here : for here in the darkness Saul
groaned.

SAUL

VIII

And I paused, held my breath in such silence,
and listened apart ;
And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered :
and sparkles 'gan dart
From the jewels that woke in his turban, at once
with a start,
All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courage-
ous at heart. 65
So the head : but the body still moved not, still
hung there erect.
And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it
unchecked,
As I sang,—

IX

“ Oh, our manhood's prime vigour !
No spirit feels waste,
“ Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew
unbraced.
“ Oh, the wild joys of living ! the leaping from
rock up to rock, 70
“ The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree,
the cool silver shock
“ Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the hunt
of the bear,
“ And the sultriness showing the lion is couched
in his lair.
“ And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with
gold dust divine,
“ And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the
full draught of wine, 75

DRAMATIC LYRICS

- “ And the sleep in the dried river-channel where
bulrushes tell
“ That the water was wont to go warbling so
softly and well.
“ How good is man’s life, the mere living ! how
fit to employ
“ All the heart and the soul and the senses for
ever in joy !
“ Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father,
whose sword thou didst guard 80
“ When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for
glorious reward ?
“ Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother,
held up as men sung
“ The low song of the nearly-departed, and hear
her faint tongue
“ Joining in while it could to the witness, ‘ Let
one more attest,
“ ‘ I have lived, seen God’s hand thro’ a lifetime,
and all was for best ’ ? 85
“ Then they sung thro’ their tears in strong
triumph, not much, but the rest.
“ And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the
working whence grew
“ Such result as, from seething grape-bundles, the
spirit strained true :
“ And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood
of wonder and hope,
“ Present promise and wealth of the future beyond
the eye’s scope,— 90
“ Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch ; a people
is thine ;
“ And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on
one head combine !
“ On one head, all the beauty and strength, love
and rage (like the throe

SAUL

“ That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour and
lets the gold go)
“ High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame
crowning them,—all
“ Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—
King Saul ! ” 95

X

And lo, with that leap of my spirit,—heart, hand,
harp and voice,
Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each
bidding rejoice
Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as when,
dare I say,
The Lord's army, in rapture of service, strains
through its array, 100
And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—“ Saul ! ”
cried I, and stopped,
And waited the thing that should follow. Then
Saul, who hung propped
By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was
struck by his name.
Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons
goes right to the aim,
And some mountain, the last to withstand her,
that held (he alone, 105
While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers)
on a broad bust of stone
A year's snow bound about for a breastplate,—
leaves grasp of the sheet ?
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously
down to his feet,
And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive yet,
your mountain of old,
With his rents, the successive bequeathings of
ages untold— 110

DRAMATIC LYRICS

Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each
furrow and scar
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest—
all hail, there they are !
—Now again to be softened with verdure, again
hold the nest
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the
green on his crest
For their food in the ardours of summer. One
long shudder thrilled 115
All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank
and was stilled
At the King's self left standing before me, re-
leased and aware.
What was gone, what remained ? All to traverse,
'twixt hope and despair ;
Death was past, life not come : so he waited.
Awhile his right hand
Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant 120
forthwith to remand
To their place what new objects should enter :
't was Saul as before.
I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor
was hurt any more
Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch
from the shore,
At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a sun's
slow decline
Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap
and entwine 125
Base with base to knit strength more intensely :
so, arm folded arm
O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

SAUL

XI

What spell or what charm,
(For, awhile there was trouble within me) what
next should I urge
To sustain him where song had restored him?—
Song filled to the verge
His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all
that it yields 130
Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty :
beyond, on what fields
Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to
brighten the eye
And bring blood to the lip, and commend them
the cup they put by ?
He saith, "It is good" ; still he drinks not : he
lets me praise life,
Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

XII

Then fancies grew rife 135
Which had come long ago on the pasture, when
round me the sheep
Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled slow
as in sleep ;
And I lay in my hollow and mused on the world
that might lie
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt
the hill and the sky :
And I laughed—"Since my days are ordained to
be passed with my flocks, 140
"Let me people at least, with my fancies, the
plains and the rocks,
"Dream the life I am never to mix with, and
image the show
"Of mankind as they live in those fashions I
hardly shall know !

DRAMATIC LYRICS

“Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses,
the courage that gains,
“And the prudence that keeps what men strive
for.” And now these old trains 145
Of vague thought came again ; I grew surer ; so,
once more the string
Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus—

XIII

“Yea, my King,”
I began—“thou dost well in rejecting mere com-
forts that spring
“From the mere mortal life held in common by
man and by brute :
“In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our
soul it bears fruit. 150
“Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—
how its stem trembled first
“Till it passed the kid’s lip, the stag’s antler ;
then safely outburst
“The fan-branches all round ; and thou mindest
when these too, in turn
“Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed per-
fect : yet more was to learn,
“E’en the good that comes in with the palm-
fruit. Our dates shall we slight, 155
“When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow ?
or care for the plight
“Of the palm’s self whose slow growth produced
them ? Not so ! stem and branch
“Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while
the palm-wine shall staunch
“Every wound of man’s spirit in winter. I pour
thee such wine.
“Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for ! the
spirit be thine ! 160

SAUL

- “By the spirit, when age shall o’ercome thee,
thou still shalt enjoy
“More indeed, than at first when unconscious,
the life of a boy.
“Crush that life, and behold its wine running!
Each deed thou hast done
“Dies, revives, goes to work in the world; until
e’en as the sun
“Looking down on the earth, though clouds
spoil him, though tempests efface, 165
“Can find nothing his own deed produced not,
must everywhere trace
“The results of his past summer-prime,—so,
each ray of thy will,
“Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long
over, shall thrill
“Thy whole people, the countless, with ardour,
till they too give forth
“A like cheer to their sons, who in turn fill the
South and the North 170
“With the radiance thy deed was the germ of.
Carouse in the past!
“But the license of age has its limit; thou diest
at last:
“As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the rose
at her height
“So with man—so his power and his beauty for
ever take flight.
“No! Again a long draught of my soul-wine!
Look forth o’er the years! 175
“Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual;
begin with the seer’s!
“Is Saul dead? In the depth of the vale make
his tomb—bid arise
“A grey mountain of marble heaped four-square
till, built to the skies,

DRAMATIC LYRICS

- “ Let it mark where the great First King slumbers : whose fame would ye know ?
“ Up above see the rock’s naked face, where the record shall go 180
“ In great characters cut by the scribe,—Such was Saul, so he did ;
“ With the sages directing the work, by the populace chid,—
“ For not half, they ’ll affirm, is comprised there ! Which fault to amend,
“ In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon they shall spend
“ (See, in tablets ’t is level before them) their praise, and record 185
“ With the gold of the graver, Saul’s story,—the statesman’s great word
“ Side by side with the poet’s sweet comment. The river’s a-wave
“ With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when prophet-winds rave :
“ So the pen gives unborn generations their due and their part
“ In thy being ! Then, first of the mighty, thank God that thou art !” 190

XIV

And behold while I sang . . . But O Thou who didst grant me that day,
And before it not seldom hast granted thy help to essay,
Carry on and complete an adventure,—my shield and my sword
In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word was my word,—
Still be with me, who then at the summit of human endeavour 195

SAUL

And scaling the highest, man's thought could,
gazed hopeless as ever
On the new stretch of heaven above me—till,
mighty to save,
Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance—
God's throne from man's grave !
Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my voice
to my heart
Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels
last night I took part, 200
As this morning I gather the fragments, alone
with my sheep,
And still fear lest the terrible glory vanish like
sleep !
For I wake in the grey dewy covert, while Hebron
upheaves
The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder,
and Kidron retrieves
Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

xv

I say then,—my song 205
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and
ever more strong
Made a proffer of good to console him—he slowly
resumed
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right-
hand replumed
His black locks to their wonted composure, ad-
justed the swathes
Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his
countenance bathes, 210
He wipes off with the robe ; and he girds now his
loins as of yore,
And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the
clasp set before.

DRAMATIC LYRICS

He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error had
bent
The broad brow from the daily communion ; and
still, though much spent
Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same,
God did choose, 215
To receive what a man may waste, desecrate,
never quite lose.
So sank he along by the tent-prop till, stayed by
the pile
Of his armour and war-cloak and garments, he
leaned there awhile,
And sat out my singing,—one arm round the tent-
prop, to raise
His bent head, and the other hung slack—till I
touched on the praise 220
I foresaw from all men in all time, to the man
patient there ;
And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then
first I was 'ware
That he sat, as I say, with my head just above
his vast knees
Which were thrust out on each side around me,
like oak-roots which please
To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked
up to know 225
If the best I could do had brought solace : he
spoke not, but slow
Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it
with care
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my
brow : thro' my hair
The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back
my head, with kind power—
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do
a flower. 230

SAUL

Thus held he me there with his great eyes that
scrutinized mine—

And oh, all my heart how it loved him ! but
where was the sign ?

I yearned—"Could I help thee, my father, in-
venting a bliss,

"I would add, to that life of the past, both the
future and this ;

"I would give thee new life altogether, as good,
ages hence,

235

"As this moment,—had love but the warrant,
love's heart to dispense !"

XVI

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—
no song more ! outbroke—

XVII

"I have gone the whole round of creation : I saw
and I spoke :

"I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, re-
ceived in my brain

"And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—
returned him again

240

"His creation's approval or censure : I spoke as
I saw :

'I report, as a man may of God's work—all 's
love, yet all 's law.

"Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me.
Each faculty tasked

"To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where
a dewdrop was asked.

"Have I knowledge ? confounded it shrivels at
Wisdom laid bare.

245

"Have I forethought ? how purblind, how blank,
to the Infinite Care !

DRAMATIC LYRICS

- “Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?
“I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more
and no less,
“In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God
is seen God
“In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the
soul and the clod.
“And thus looking within and around me, I ever
renew
“(With that stoop of the soul which in bending
upraises it too)
“The submission of man’s nothing-perfect to
God’s all-complete,
“As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to
his feet.
“Yet with all this abounding experience, this
deity known,
“I shall dare to discover some province, some
gift of my own.
“There’s a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to
hoodwink,
“I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as
I think)
“Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye,
I worst
“E’en the Giver in one gift.—Behold, I could
love if I durst!
“But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may
o’ertake
“God’s own speed in the one way of love: I ab-
stain for love’s sake.
“—What, my soul? see thus far and no farther?
when doors, great and small,
“Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should
the hundredth appal?

SAUL

- “ In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the
greatest of all? 265
- “ Do I find love so full in my nature, God’s ultimate gift,
- “ That I doubt his own love can compete with it?
Here, the parts shift?
- “ Here, the creature surpass the Creator,—the
end, what Began?
- “ Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for
this man,
- “ And dare doubt he alone shall not help him, who
yet alone can? 270
- “ Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare
will, much less power,
- “ To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the
marvellous dower
- “ Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make
such a soul,
- “ Such a body, and then such an earth for in-
sphering the whole?
- “ And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm
tears attest) 275
- “ These good things being given, to go on, and
give one more, the best?
- “ Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, main-
tain at the height
- “ This perfection,—succeed with life’s dayspring,
death’s minute of night?
- “ Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul
the mistake,
- “ Saul the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and
bid him awake 280
- “ From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to
find himself set
- “ Clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new
harmony yet

DRAMATIC LYRICS

- “To be run, and continued, and ended—who knows?—or endure !
“The man taught enough, by life’s dream, of the rest to make sure ;
“By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss, 285
“And the next world’s reward and repose, by the struggles in this.

XVIII

- “I believe it ! ’T is thou, God, that givest, ’t is I who receive :
“In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.
“All ’s one gift: thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt to my prayer
“As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the air. 290
“From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy dread Sabaoth :
“I will?—the mere atoms despise me ! Why am I not loth
“To look that, even that in the face too ? Why is it I dare
“Think but lightly of such impuissance ? What stops my despair ?
“This ;—’t is not what man Does which exalts him, but what man Would do ! 295
“See the King—I would help him but cannot, the wishes fall through.
“Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,
“To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—knowing which,

SAUL

"I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through me now !

"Would I suffer for him that I love ? So wouldst thou—so wilt thou !

300

"So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown—

"And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down

"One spot for the creature to stand in ! It is by no breath,

"Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with death !

"As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved

305

"Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being Beloved !

"He who did most, shall bear most ; the strongest shall stand the most weak.

"'T is the weakness in strength, that I cry for ! my flesh, that I seek

"In the Godhead ! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be

"A Face like my face that receives thee ; a Man like to me,

310

"Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever : a Hand like this hand

"Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee ! See the Christ stand !"

XIX

I know not too well how I found my way home in the night.

There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to right,

DRAMATIC LYRICS

Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive,
the aware : 315
I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as
strugglingly there,
As a runner beset by the populace famished for
news—
Life or death. The whole earth was awakened,
hell loosed with her crews ;
And the stars of night beat with emotion, and
tingled and shot
Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge :
but I fainted not, 320
For the Hand still impelled me at once and sup-
ported, suppressed
All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and
holy behest,
Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth
sank to rest.
Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered
from earth—
Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's
tender birth ; 325
In the gathered intensity brought to the grey of
the hills ;
In the shuddering forests' held breath ; in the
sudden wind-thrills ;
In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with
eye sidling still
Though averted with wonder and dread ; in the
birds stiff and chill
That rose heavily, as I approached them, made
stupid with awe : 330
E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—he felt the
new law.
The same stared in the white humid faces upturned
by the flowers ;

SAUL

The same worked in the heart of the cedar and
moved the vine-bowers :
And the little brooks witnessing murmured, per-
sistent and low,
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices—"E'en
so, it is so !"

335

MY STAR

ALL that I know
Of a certain star
Is, it can throw
(Like the angled spar)
Now a dart of red,
Now a dart of blue ;
Till my friends have said
They would fain see, too,
My star that dartles the red and the blue !
Then it stops like a bird ; like a flower, hangs
furl'd :
They must solace themselves with the Saturn
above it.
What matter to me if their star is a world ?
Mine has opened its soul to me ; therefore I
love it.

BY THE FIRE-SIDE

I

How well I know what I mean to do
When the long dark autumn-evenings come :
And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue ?
With the music of all thy voices, dumb
In life's November too !

5

II

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
O'er a great wise book as beseemeth age,
While the shutters flap as the cross-wind blows,
And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
Not verse now, only prose !

10

III

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,
"There he is at it, deep in Greek :
"Now then, or never, out we slip
"To cut from the hazels by the creek
"A mainmast for our ship !"

15

IV

I shall be at it indeed, my friends :
Greek puts already on either side
Such a branch-work forth as soon extends
To a vista opening far and wide,
And I pass out where it ends.

20

DRAMATIC LYRICS

V

The outside-frame, like your hazel-trees :
But the inside-archway widens fast,
And a rarer sort succeeds to these,
And we slope to Italy at last
And youth, by green degrees. 25

VI

I follow wherever I am led,
Knowing so well the leader's hand :
Oh woman-country, wooed not wed,
Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,
Laid to their hearts instead ! 30

VII

Look at the ruined chapel again
Half-way up in the Alpine gorge !
Is that a tower, I point you plain,
Or is it a mill, or an iron-forge
Breaks solitude in vain ? 35

VIII

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things ;
The woods are round us, heaped and dim ;
From slab to slab how it slips and springs,
The thread of water single and slim,
Through the ravage some torrent brings ! 40

IX

Does it feed the little lake below ?
That speck of white just on its marge
Is Pella ; see, in the evening-glow,
How sharp the silver spear-heads charge
When Alp meets heaven in snow ! 45

BY THE FIRE-SIDE

X

On our other side is the straight-up rock ;
And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it
By boulder-stones where lichens mock
The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit
Their teeth to the polished block. 50

XI

Oh the sense of the yellow mountain-flowers,
And thorny balls, each three in one,
The chestnuts throw on our path in showers !
For the drop of the woodland fruit 's begun,
These early November hours, 55

XII

That crimson the creeper's leaf across
Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,
O'er a shield else gold from rim to boss,
And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped
Elf-needed mat of moss, 60

XIII

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
Last evening—nay, in to-day's first dew
Yon sudden coral nipple bulged,
Where a freaked fawn-coloured flaky crew
Of toadstools peep indulged. 65

XIV

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge
That takes the turn to a range beyond,
Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge
Where the water is stopped in a stagnant pond
Danced over by the midge. 70

DRAMATIC LYRICS

XV

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
Blackish-grey and mostly wet ;
Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.
See here again, how the lichens fret
And the roots of the ivy strike ! 75

XVI

Poor little place, where its one priest comes
On a festa-day, if he comes at all,
To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,
Gathered within that precinct small
By the dozen ways one roams— 80

XVII

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,
Leave the grange where the woodman stores his
nuts,
Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread
Their gear on the rock's bare juts. 85

XVIII

It has some pretension too, this front,
With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise
Set over the porch, Art's early wont :
'T is John in the Desert, I surmise,
But has borne the weather's brunt— 90

XIX

Not from the fault of the builder, though,
For a pent-house properly projects
Where three carved beams make a certain show,
Dating—good thought of our architect's—
'Five, six, nine, he lets you know. 95

BY THE FIRE-SIDE

XX

And all day long a bird sings there,
And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times ;
The place is silent and aware ;
It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,
But that is its own affair. 100

XXI

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
Oh heart, my own, oh eyes, mine too,
Whom else could I dare look backward for,
With whom beside should I dare pursue
The path grey heads abhor ? 105

XXII

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them ;
Youth, flowery all the way, there stops—
Not they ; age threatens and they contemn,
Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,
One inch from life's safe hem ! 110

XXIII

With me, youth led . . . I will speak now,
No longer watch you as you sit
Reading by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Mutely, my heart knows how— 115

XXIV

When, if I think but deep enough,
You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme ;
And you, too, find without rebuff
Response your soul seeks many a time
Piercing its fine flesh-stuff. 120

DRAMATIC LYRICS

XXV

My own, confirm me ! If I tread
This path back, is it not in pride
To think how little I dreamed it led
To an age so blest that, by its side,
Youth seems the waste instead ?

125

XXVI

My own, see where the years conduct !
At first, 't was something our two souls
Should mix as mists do ; each is sucked
In each now : on, the new stream rolls,
Whatever rocks obstruct.

130

XXVII

Think, when our one soul understands
The great Word which makes all things new,
When earth breaks up and heaven expands,
How will the change strike me and you
In the house not made with hands ?

135

XXVIII

Oh I must feel your brain prompt mine,
Your heart anticipate my heart,
You must be just before, in fine,
See and make me see, for your part,
New depths of the divine !

140

XXIX

But who could have expected this
When we two drew together first
Just for the obvious human bliss,
To satisfy life's daily thirst
With a thing men seldom miss ?

145

BY THE FIRE-SIDE

XXX

Come back with me to the first of all,
Let us lean and love it over again,
Let us now forget and now recall,
Break the rosary in a pearly rain,
And gather what we let fall !

150

XXXI

What did I say ?—that a small bird sings
All day long, save when a brown pair
Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings
Strained to a bell: 'gainst noon-day glare
You count the streaks and rings.

155

XXXII

But at afternoon or almost eve
'T is better ; then the silence grows
To that degree, you half believe
It must get rid of what it knows,
Its bosom does so heave.

160

XXXIII

Hither we walked then, side by side,
Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,
And still I questioned or replied,
While my heart, convulsed to really speak,
Lay choking in its pride.

165

XXXIV

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,
And pity and praise the chapel sweet,
And care about the fresco's loss,
And wish for our souls a like retreat,
And wonder at the moss.

170

DRAMATIC LYRICS

XXXV

Stoop and kneel on the settle under,
Look through the window's grated square :
Nothing to see ! For fear of plunder,
The cross is down and the altar bare,
As if thieves don't fear thunder.

175

XXXVI

We stoop and look in through the grate,
See the little porch and rustic door,
Read duly the dead builder's date ;
Then cross the bridge that we crossed before,
Take the path again—but wait !

180

XXXVII

Oh moment, one and infinite !
The water slips o'er stock and stone ;
The West is tender, hardly bright :
How grey at once is the evening grown—
One star, its chrysolite !

185

XXXVIII

We two stood there with never a third,
But each by each, as each knew well :
The sights we saw and the sounds we heard,
The lights and the shades made up a spell
Till the trouble grew and stirred.

190

XXXIX

Oh, the little more, and how much it is !
And the little less, and what worlds away !
How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
And life be a proof of this !

195

BY THE FIRE-SIDE

XL

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen
So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her :
I could fix her face with a guard between,
And find her soul as when friends confer,
Friends—lovers that might have been. 200

XLI

For my heart had a touch of the woodland-time,
Wanting to sleep now over its best.
Shake the whole tree in the summer-prime,
But bring to the last leaf no such test !
“ Hold the last fast ! ” runs the rhyme. 205

XLII

For a chance to make your little much,
To gain a lover and lose a friend,
Venture the tree and a myriad such,
When nothing you mar but the year can mend:
But a last leaf—fear to touch ! 210

XLIII

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall
Eddying down till it find your face
At some slight wind—best chance of all !
Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-place
You trembled to forestall ! 215

XLIV

Worth how well, those dark grey eyes,
That hair so dark and dear, how worth
That a man should strive and agonize,
And taste a veriest hell on earth
For the hope of such a prize ! 220

DRAMATIC LYRICS

XLV

You might have turned and tried a man,
Set him a space to weary and wear,
And prove which suited more your plan,
His best of hope or his worst despair,
Yet end as he began.

225

XLVI

But you spared me this, like the heart you are,
And filled my empty heart at a word.
If two lives join, there is oft a scar,
They are one and one, with a shadowy third ;
One near one is too far.

230

XLVII

A moment after, and hands unseen
Were hanging the night around us fast ;
But we knew that a bar was broken between
Life and life : we were mixed at last
In spite of the mortal screen.

235

XLVIII

The forests had done it ; there they stood ;
We caught for a moment the powers at play :
They had mingled us so, for once and good,
Their work was done—we might go or stay,
They relapsed to their ancient mood.

240

XLIX

How the world is made for each of us !
How all we perceive and know in it
Tends to some moment's product thus,
When a soul declares itself—to wit,
By its fruit, the thing it does !

245

BY THE FIRE-SIDE

L

Be hate that fruit or love that fruit,
It forwards the general deed of man,
And each of the Many helps to recruit
The life of the race by a general plan ;
Each living his own, to boot. 250

LI

I am named and known by that moment's feat ;
There took my station and degree ;
So grew my own small life complete,
As nature obtained her best of me—
One born to love you, sweet ! 255

LII

And to watch you sink by the fire-side now
Back again, as you mutely sit
Musing by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Yonder, my heart knows how ! 260

LIII

So, earth has gained by one man the more,
And the gain of earth must be heaven's gain
too ;
And the whole is well worth thinking o'er
When autumn comes : which I mean to do
One day, as I said before. 265

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND

I

My love, this is the bitterest, that thou—
Who art all truth, and who dost love me now
As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks to say—
Shouldst love so truly, and couldst love me still
A whole long life through, had but love its will, 5
Would death that leads me from thee brook
delay.

II

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand
Will never let mine go, nor heart withstand
The beating of my heart to reach its place.
When shall I look for thee and feel thee gone? 10
When cry for the old comfort and find none?
Never, I know! Thy soul is in thy face.

III

Oh, I should fade—'t is willed so! Might I save,
Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave
Joy to thy sense, for that was precious too. 15
It is not to be granted. But the soul
Whence the love comes, all ravage leaves that
whole;
Vainly the flesh fades; soul makes all things
new.

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND

IV

It would not be because my eye grew dim
Thou couldst not find the love there, thanks to
Him 20

Who never is dishonoured in the spark
He gave us from his fire of fires, and bade
Remember whence it sprang, nor be afraid
While that burns on, though all the rest grow
dark.

V

So, how thou wouldst be perfect, white and clean 25
Outside as inside, soul and soul's demesne
Alike, this body given to show it by !
Oh, three-parts through the worst of life's abyss,
What plaudits from the next world after this,
Couldst thou repeat a stroke and gain the sky ! 30

VI

And is it not the bitterer to think
That, disengage our hands and thou wilt sink
Although thy love was love in very deed ?
I know that nature ! Pass a festive day,
Thou dost not throw its relic-flower away 35
Nor bid its music's loitering echo speed.

VII

Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie where it fell ;
If old things remain old things all is well,
For thou art grateful as becomes man best :
And hadst thou only heard me play one tune, 40
Or viewed me from a window, not so soon
With thee would such things fade as with the
rest.

DRAMATIC LYRICS

VIII

I seem to see ! We meet and part ; 't is brief ;
The book I opened keeps a folded leaf,
The very chair I sat on, breaks the rank ; 45
That is a portrait of me on the wall—
Three lines, my face comes at so slight a call :
And for all this, one little hour to thank !

IX

But now, because the hour through years was fixed,
Because our inmost beings met and mixed, 50
Because thou once hast loved me—wilt thou dare
Say to thy soul and Who may list beside,
“ Therefore she is immortally my bride ;
“ Chance cannot change my love, nor time impair.

X

“ So, what if in the dusk of life that 's left, 55
“ I, a tired traveller of my sun bereft,
“ Look from my path when, mimicking the same,
“ The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and gone ?
“ —Where was it till the sunset ? where anon
“ It will be at the sunrise ! What 's to blame ? ” 60

XI

Is it so helpful to thee ? Canst thou take
The mimic up, nor, for the true thing's sake,
Put gently by such efforts at a beam ?
Is the remainder of the way so long,
Thou need'st the little solace, thou the strong ? 65
Watch out thy watch, let weak ones doze and
dream !

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND

XII

—Ah, but the fresher faces ! “Is it true,”
Thou ’lt ask, “some eyes are beautiful and new ?
“Some hair,—how can one choose but grasp
such wealth ?
“And if a man would press his lips to lips 70
“Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose-cup there slips
“The dew-drop out of, must it be by stealth ?

XIII

“It cannot change the love still kept for Her,
“More than if such a picture I prefer
“Passing a day with, to a room’s bare side : 75
The painted form takes nothing she possessed,
Yet, while the Titian’s Venus lies at rest,
Amanlooks. Once more, what is there to chide ?”

XIV

So must I see, from where I sit and watch,
My own self sell myself, my hand attach 80
Its warrant to the very thefts from me—
Thy singleness of soul that made me proud,
Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,
Thy man’s-truth I was bold to bid God see !

XV

Love so, then, if thou wilt ! Give all thou canst 85
Away to the new faces—disentranced,
(Say it and think it) obdurate no more :
Re-issue looks and words from the old mint,
Pass them afresh, no matter whose the print
Image and superscription once they bore ! 90

DRAMATIC LYRICS

XVI

Re-coin thyself and give it them to spend,—
It all comes to the same thing at the end,
 Since mine thou wast, mine art and mine shalt be,
Faithful or faithless, sealing up the sum
Or lavish of my treasure, thou must come 95
 Back to the heart's place here I keep for thee !

XVII

Only, why should it be with stain at all?
Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of coronal,
 Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow?
Why need the other women know so much, 100
And talk together, "Such the look and such
 "The smile he used to love with, then as now !"

XVIII

Might I die last and show thee ! Should I find
Such hardship in the few years left behind,
 If free to take and light my lamp, and go 105
Into thy tomb, and shut the door and sit,
Seeing thy face on those four sides of it
 The better that they are so blank, I know !

XIX

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn o'er
Within my mind each look, get more and more 110
 By heart each word, too much to learn at first;
And join thee all the fitter for the pause
'Neath the low doorway's lintel. That were cause
 For lingering, though thou calledst, if I durst !

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND

XX

And yet thou art the nobler of us two : 115
What dare I dream of, that thou canst not do,
 Outstripping my ten small steps with one stride?
I 'll say then, here 's a trial and a task—
Is it to bear?—if easy, I 'll not ask :
 Though love fail, I can trust on in thy pride. 120

XXI

Pride?—when those eyes forestall the life behind
The death I have to go through!—when I find,
 Now that I want thy help most, all of thee!
What did I fear? Thy love shall hold me fast
Until the little minute's sleep is past 125
 And I wake saved.—And yet it will not be!

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

I

I WONDER do you feel to-day
As I have felt since, hand in hand,
We sat down on the grass, to stray
In spirit better through the land,
This morn of Rome and May?

II

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
Has tantalized me many times,
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw
Mocking across our path) for rhymes
To catch at and let go.

III

Help me to hold it! First it left
The yellowing fennel, run to seed
There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,
Some old tomb's ruin : yonder weed
Took up the floating weft,

IV

Where one small orange cup amassed
Five beetles,—blind and green they grope
Among the honey-meal : and last,
Everywhere on the grassy slope
I traced it. Hold it fast!

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

V

The champaign with its endless fleece
Of feathery grasses everywhere !
Silence and passion, joy and peace,
An everlasting wash of air—
Rome's ghost since her decease.

VI

Such life here, through such lengths of hours,
Such miracles performed in play,
Such primal naked forms of flowers,
Such letting nature have her way
While heaven looks from its towers !

VII

How say you ? Let us, O my dove,
Let us be unashamed of soul,
As earth lies bare to heaven above !
How is it under our control
To love or not to love ?

VIII

I would that you were all to me,
You that are just so much, no more.
Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free !
Where does the fault lie ? What the core
O' the wound, since wound must be ?

IX

I would I could adopt your will,
See with your eyes, and set my heart
Beating by yours, and drink my fill
At your soul's springs,—your part my part
In life, for good and ill.

DRAMATIC LYRICS

X

No. I yearn upward, touch you close,
Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose
And love it more than tongue can speak—
Then the good minute goes.

XI

Already how am I so far
Out of that minute? Must I go
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
Onward, whenever light winds blow,
Fixed by no friendly star?

XII

Just when I seemed about to learn!
Where is the thread now? Off again!
The old trick! Only I discern—
Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

MISCONCEPTIONS

I

THIS is a spray the Bird clung to,
Making it blossom with pleasure,
Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,
Fit for her nest and her treasure.
Oh, what a hope beyond measure
Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet hung
to,—
So to be singled out, built in, and sung to !

II

THIS is a heart the Queen leant on,
Thrilled in a minute erratic,
Ere the true bosom she bent on,
Meet for love's regal dalmatic.
Oh, what a fancy ecstatic
Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer went on—
Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent on !

A SERENADE AT THE VILLA

I

THAT was I, you heard last night,
When there rose no moon at all,
Nor, to pierce the strained and tight
Tent of heaven, a planet small :
Life was dead and so was light.

II

Not a twinkle from the fly,
Not a glimmer from the worm ;
When the crickets stopped their cry,
When the owls forbore a term,
You heard music ; that was I.

III

Earth turned in her sleep with pain,
Sultrily suspired for proof :
In at heaven and out again,
Lightning !—where it broke the roof,
Bloodlike, some few drops of rain.

IV

What they could my words expressed,
O my love, my all, my one !
Singing helped the verses best,
And when singing's best was done,
To my lute I left the rest.

A SERENADE AT THE VILLA

V

So wore night ; the East was gray,
White the broad-faced hemlock-flowers :
There would be another day ;
Ere its first of heavy hours
Found me, I had passed away.

VI

What became of all the hopes,
Words and song and lute as well ?
Say, this struck you—"When life gropes
"Feebly for the path where fell
"Light last on the evening slopes,

VII

"One friend in that path shall be,
"To secure my step from wrong ;
"One to count night day for me,
"Patient through the watches long,
"Serving most with none to see."

VIII

Never say—as something bodes—
"So, the worst has yet a worse !
"When life halts 'neath double loads,
"Better the taskmaster's curse
"Than such music on the roads !

IX

"When no moon succeeds the sun,
"Nor can pierce the midnight's tent
"Any star, the smallest one,
"While some drops, where lightning rent,
"Show the final storm begun—

DRAMATIC LYRICS

X

“ When the fire-fly hides its spot,
“ When the garden-voices fail
“ In the darkness thick and hot,—
“ Shall another voice avail,
“ That shape be where these are not ?

XI

“ Has some plague a longer lease,
“ Proffering its help uncouth ?
“ Can't one even die in peace ?
“ As one shuts one's eyes on youth,
“ Is that face the last one sees ? ”

XII

Oh how dark your villa was,
Windows fast and obdurate !
How the garden grudged me grass
Where I stood—the iron gate
Ground its teeth to let me pass !

ONE WAY OF LOVE

I

ALL June I bound the rose in sheaves.
Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves
And strew them where Pauline may pass.
She will not turn aside? Alas!
Let them lie. Suppose they die?
The chance was they might take her eye.

II

How many a month I strove to suit
These stubborn fingers to the lute!
To-day I venture all I know.
She will not hear my music? So!
Break the string; fold music's wing:
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing!

III

My whole life long I learned to love.
This hour my utmost art I prove
And speak my passion—heaven or hell?
She will not give me heaven? 'T is well!
Lose who may—I still can say,
Those who win heaven, blest are they!

ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE

I

JUNE was not over
 Though past the full,
And the best of her roses
 Had yet to blow,
 When a man I know
(But shall not discover,
 Since ears are dull,
 And time discloses)
Turned him and said with a man's true air,
Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 't were,—
“If I tire of your June, will she greatly care?”

II

Well, dear, in-doors with you !
 True ! serene deadness
Tries a man's temper.
 What 's in the blossom
 June wears on her bosom ?
Can it clear scores with you ?
 Sweetness and redness.
 Eadem semper !
Go, let me care for it greatly or slightly !
If June mend her bower now, your hand left
 unsightly
By plucking the roses,—my June will do rightly.

ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE

III

And after, for pastime,
If June be refulgent
With flowers in completeness,
All petals, no prickles,
Delicious as trickles
Of wine poured at mass-time,—
And choose One indulgent
To redness and sweetness :
Or if, with experience of man and of spider,
June use my June-lightning, the strong insect-
ridder,
And stop the fresh film-work,—why, June will
consider.

A PRETTY WOMAN

I

THAT fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers,
And the blue eye
Dear and dewy,
And that infantine fresh air of hers !

II

To think men cannot take you, Sweet,
And enfold you,
Ay, and hold you,
And so keep you what they make you, Sweet!

III

You like us for a glance, you know—
For a word's sake
Or a sword's sake,
All 's the same, whate'er the chance, you know.

IV

And in turn we make you ours, we say—
You and youth too,
Eyes and mouth too,
All the face composed of flowers, we say.

V

All 's our own, to make the most of, Sweet—
Sing and say for,
Watch and pray for,
Keep a secret or go boast of, Sweet !

A PRETTY WOMAN

VI

But for loving, why, you would not, Sweet,
 Though we prayed you,
 Paid you, brayed you
In a mortar—for you could not, Sweet !

VII

So, we leave the sweet face fondly there :
 Be its beauty
 Its sole duty !
Let all hope of grace beyond, lie there !

VIII

And while the face lies quiet there,
 Who shall wonder
 That I ponder
A conclusion ? I will try it there.

IX

As,—why must one, for the love foregone,
 Scout mere liking ?
 Thunder-striking
Earth,—the heaven, we looked above for, gone !

X

Why, with beauty, needs there money be,
 Love with liking ?
 Crush the fly-king
In his gauze, because no honey-bee ?

XI

May not liking be so simple-sweet,
 If love grew there
 'T would undo there
All that breaks the cheek to dimples sweet ?

DRAMATIC LYRICS

XII

Is the creature too imperfect, say ?
 Would you mend it
 And so end it ?
Since not all addition perfects aye !

XIII

Or is it of its kind, perhaps,
 Just perfection—
 Whence, rejection
Of a grace not to its mind, perhaps ?

XIV

Shall we burn up, tread that face at once
 Into tinder,
 And so hinder
Sparks from kindling all the place at once ?

XV

Or else kiss away one's soul on her ?
 Your love-fancies !
 —A sick man sees
Truer, when his hot eyes roll on her !

XVI

Thus the craftsman thinks to grace the rose,—
 Plucks a mould-flower
 For his gold flower,
Uses fine things that efface the rose :

A PRETTY WOMAN

XVII

Rosy rubies make its cup more rose,
Precious metals
Ape the petals,—
Last, some old king locks it up, morose !

XVIII

Then how grace a rose ? I know a way !
Leave it, rather.
Must you gather ?
Smell, kiss, wear it—at last, throw away !

RESPECTABILITY

I

DEAR, had the world in its caprice
Deigned to proclaim "I know you both,
"Have recognized your plighted troth,
"Am sponsor for you : live in peace !"—
How many precious months and years
Of youth had passed, that speed so fast,
Before we found it out at last,
The world, and what it fears ?

II

How much of priceless life were spent
With men that every virtue decks,
And women models of their sex,
Society's true ornament,—
Ere we dared wander, nights like this,
Thro' wind and rain, and watch the Seine,
And feel the Boulevart break again
To warmth and light and bliss ?

III

I know ! the world proscribes not love ;
Allows my finger to caress
Your lips' contour and downiness,
Provided it supply a glove.
The world's good word !—the Institute !
Guizot receives Montalembert !
Eh ? Down the court three lampions flare :
Put forward your best foot !

LOVE IN A LIFE

I

Room after room,
I hunt the house through
We inhabit together.
Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find
her—
Next time, herself!—not the trouble behind her
Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume!
As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed
anew :
Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her
feather.

II

Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door ;
I try the fresh fortune—
Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.
Still the same chance ! she goes out as I enter.
Spend my whole day in the quest,—who cares ?
But 't is twilight, you see,—with such suites to
explore,
Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune !

LIFE IN A LOVE

ESCAPE me ?

Never—

Beloved !

While I am I, and you are you,

So long as the world contains us both,

Me the loving and you the loth,

While the one eludes, must the other pursue.

My life is a fault at last, I fear :

It seems too much like a fate, indeed !

Though I do my best I shall scarce succeed.

But what if I fail of my purpose here ?

It is but to keep the nerves at strain,

To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,

And, baffled, get up and begin again,—

So the chace takes up one's life, that 's all.

While, look but once from your farthest bound

At me so deep in the dust and dark,

No sooner the old hope goes to ground

Than a new one, straight to the self-same mark,

I shape me—

Ever

Removed !

IN THREE DAYS

I

So, I shall see her in three days
And just one night, but nights are short,
Then two long hours, and that is morn.
See how I come, unchanged, unworn !
Feel, where my life broke off from thine,
How fresh the splinters keep and fine,—
Only a touch and we combine !

II

Too long, this time of year, the days !
But nights, at least the nights are short.
As night shows where her one moon is,
A hand's-breadth of pure light and bliss,
So life's night gives my lady birth
And my eyes hold her ! What is worth
The rest of heaven, the rest of earth ?

III

O loaded curls, release your store
Of warmth and scent, as once before
The tingling hair did, lights and darks
Outbreaking into fairy sparks,
When under curl and curl I pried
After the warmth and scent inside,
Thro' lights and darks how manifold—
The dark inspired, the light controlled !
As early Art embrowns the gold.

DRAMATIC LYRICS

IV

What great fear, should one say, "Three days
"That change the world might change as well
"Your fortune ; and if joy delays,
"Be happy that no worse befell !"
What small fear, if another says,
"Three days and one short night beside
"May throw no shadow on your ways ;
"But years must teem with change untried,
"With chance not easily defied,
"With an end somewhere undescried."
No fear !—or if a fear be born
This minute, it dies out in scorn.
Fear ? I shall see her in three days
And one night, now the nights are short,
Then just two hours, and that is morn.

IN A YEAR

I

NEVER any more,
While I live,
Need I hope to see his face
As before.
Once his love grown chill,
Mine may strive :
Bitterly we re-embrace,
Single still.

II

Was it something said,
Something done,
Vexed him? was it touch of hand,
Turn of head?
Strange! that very way
Love begun :
I as little understand
Love's decay.

III

When I sewed or drew,
I recall
How he looked as if I sung,
—Sweetly too.
If I spoke a word,
First of all
Up his cheek the colour sprung,
Then he heard.

DRAMATIC LYRICS

IV

Sitting by my side,
At my feet,
So he breathed but air I breathed,
Satisfied !
I, too, at love's brim
Touched the sweet :
I would die if death bequeathed
Sweet to him.

V

“Speak, I love thee best !”
He exclaimed :
“Let thy love my own foretell !”
I confessed :
“Clasp my heart on thine
“Now unblamed,
“Since upon thy soul as well
“Hangeth mine !”

VI

Was it wrong to own,
Being truth ?
Why should all the giving prove
His alone ?
I had wealth and ease,
Beauty, youth :
Since my lover gave me love,
I gave these.

VII

That was all I meant,
—To be just,
And the passion I had raised,
To content.

WOMEN AND ROSES

I

I DREAM of a red-rose tree.
And which of its roses three
Is the dearest rose to me ?

II

Round and round, like a dance of snow
In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go
Floating the women faded for ages,
Sculptured in stone, on the poet's pages.
Then follow women fresh and gay,
Living and loving and loved to-day.
Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of maidens,
Beauties yet unborn. And all, to one cadence,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

III

Dear rose, thy term is reached,
Thy leaf hangs loose and bleached :
Bees pass it unimpeached.

IV

Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb,
You, great shapes of the antique time !
How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,
Break my heart at your feet to please you ?
Oh, to possess and be possessed !
Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid breast !
Once but of love, the poesy, the passion,
Drink but once and die !—In vain, the same
fashion,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

WOMEN AND ROSES

V

Dear rose, thy joy 's undimmed,
Thy cup is ruby-rimmed,
Thy cup's heart nectar-brimmed.

VI

Deep, as drops from a statue's plinth
The bee sucked in by the hyacinth,
So will I bury me while burning,
Quench like him at a plunge my yearning,
Eyes in your eyes, lips on your lips !
Fold me fast where the cincture slips,
Prison all my soul in eternities of pleasure,
Girdle me for once ! But no—the old measure,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

VII

Dear rose without a thorn,
Thy bud 's the babe unborn :
First streak of a new morn.

VIII

Wings, lend wings for the cold, the clear !
What is far conquers what is near.
Roses will bloom nor want beholders,
Sprung from the dust where our flesh moulders.
What shall arrive with the cycle's change ?
A novel grace and a beauty strange.
I will make an Eve, be the artist that began her,
Shaped her to his mind !—Alas ! in like manner
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

BEFORE

I

LET them fight it out, friend ! things have gone too far.

God must judge the couple: leave them as they are—
—Whichever one 's the guiltless, to his glory,
And whichever one the guilt 's with, to my story !

II

Why, you would not bid men, sunk in such a slough,
Strike no arm out further, stick and stink as now,
Leaving right and wrong to settle the embroilment,
Heaven with snaky hell, in torture and entoilment?

III

Who 's the culprit of them? How must he conceive
God—the queen he caps to, laughing in his sleeve,
“ 'T is but decent to profess oneself beneath her :
“ Still, one must not be too much in earnest, either!

IV

Better sin the whole sin, sure that God observes ;
Then go live his life out ! Life will try his nerves,
When the sky, which noticed all, makes no disclosure,
And the earth keeps up her terrible composure.

V

Let him pace at pleasure, past the walls of rose,
Pluck their fruits when grape-trees graze him as
he goes !
For he 'gins to guess the purpose of the garden,
With the sly mute thing, beside there, for a warden.

BEFORE

VI

What 's the leopard-dog-thing, constant at his
side,
A leer and lie in every eye of its obsequious hide?
When will come an end to all the mock obeisance,
And the price appear that pays for the misfeas-
ance?

VII

So much for the culprit. Who 's the martyred
man?
Let him bear one stroke more, for be sure he can!
He that strove thus evil's lump with good to leaven,
Let him give his blood at last and get his heaven!

VIII

All or nothing, stake it! Trusts he God or no?
Thus far and no farther? farther? be it so!
Now, enough of your chicane of prudent pauses,
Sage provisos, sub-intents and saving-clauses!

IX

Ah, "forgive" you bid him? While God's
champion lives,
Wrong shall be resisted: dead, why, he forgives.
But you must not end my friend ere you begin him;
Evil stands not crowned on earth, while breath is
in him.

X

Once more—Will the wronger, at this last of all,
Dare to say, "I did wrong," rising in his fall?
No?—Let go, then! Both the fighters to their
places!
While I count three, step you back as many paces!

AFTER

TAKE the cloak from his face, and at first
Let the corpse do its worst !

How he lies in his rights of a man !
Death has done all death can.
And, absorbed in the new life he leads,
He recks not, he heeds
Nor his wrong nor my vengeance ; both strike
On his senses alike,
And are lost in the solemn and strange
Surprise of the change.

Ha, what avails death to erase
His offence, my disgrace ?
I would we were boys as of old
In the field, by the fold :
His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn
Were so easily borne !

I stand here now, he lies in his place :
Cover the face !

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

A PICTURE AT FANO

I

DEAR and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave
That child, when thou hast done with him,
for me !
Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
Shall find performed thy special ministry,
And time come for departure, thou, suspending
Thy flight, mayst see another child for tending,
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

II

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,
From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,
—And suddenly my head is covered o'er
With those wings, white above the child who
prays
Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee guarding
Me, out of all the world ; for me, discarding
Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its
door.

III

I would not look up thither past thy head
Because the door opes, like that child, I know,
For I should have thy gracious face instead,
Thou bird of God ! And wilt thou bend me
low

DRAMATIC LYRICS

Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,
And lift them up to pray, and gently tether
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garment's
spread ?

IV

If this was ever granted, I would rest
My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,
Pressing the brain, which too much thought
expands,
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,
And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

V

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired !
I think how I should view the earth and skies
And sea, when once again my brow was bared
After thy healing, with such different eyes.
O world, as God has made it ! All is beauty :
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.
What further may be sought for or declared ?

VI

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
(Alfred, dear friend !)—that little child to pray,
Holding the little hands up, each to each
Pressed gently,—with his own head turned
away
Over the earth where so much lay before him
Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er
him,
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

VII

We were at Fano, and three times we went
To sit and see him in his chapel there,
And drink his beauty to our soul's content
—My angel with me too : and since I care
For dear Guercino's fame (to which in power
And glory comes this picture for a dower,
Fraught with a pathos so magnificent)—

VIII

And since he did not work thus earnestly
At all times, and has else endured some wrong—
I took one thought his picture struck from me,
And spread it out, translating it to song.
My love is here. Where are you, dear old friend ?
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end ?
This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

MEMORABILIA

I

Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems and new!

II

But you were living before that,
And also you are living after;
And the memory I started at—
My starting moves your laughter.

III

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
And a certain use in the world no doubt,
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
'Mid the blank miles round about:

IV

For there I picked up on the heather
And there I put inside my breast
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather!
Well, I forget the rest.

POPULARITY

I

STAND still, true poet that you are !

I know you ; let me try and draw you.
Some night you 'll fail us : when afar

You rise, remember one man saw you,
Knew you, and named a star !

II

My star, God's glow-worm ! Why extend
That loving hand of his which leads you,
Yet locks you safe from end to end

Of this dark world, unless he needs you,
Just saves your light to spend ?

III

His clenched hand shall uncloze at last,
I know, and let out all the beauty :

My poet holds the future fast,
Accepts the coming ages' duty,
Their present for this past.

IV

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow
Shall clear, to God the chalice raising ;

“ Others give best at first, but thou
“ Forever set'st our table praising
“ Keep'st the good wine till now ! ”

DRAMATIC LYRICS

V

Meantime, I 'll draw you as you stand,
With few or none to watch and wonder :
I 'll say—a fisher, on the sand
By Tyre the old, with ocean-plunder,
A netful, brought to land.

VI

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
Whereof one drop worked miracles,
And coloured like Astarte's eyes
Raw silk the merchant sells ?

VII

And each bystander of them all
Could criticize, and quote tradition
How depths of blue sublimed some pall
—To get which, pricked a king's ambition ;
Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

VIII

Yet there 's the dye, in that rough mesh,
The sea has only just o'erwhispered !
Live whelks, each lip's beard dripping fresh,
As if they still the water's lip heard
Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

IX

Enough to furnish Solomon
Such hangings for his cedar-house,
That, when gold-robed he took the throne
In that abyss of blue, the Spouse
Might swear his presence shone

POPULARITY

X

Most like the centre-spike of gold
Which burns deep in the blue-bell's womb,
What time, with ardours manifold,
The bee goes singing to her groom,
Drunken and overbold.

XI

Mere conchs ! not fit for warp or woof !
Till cunning come to pound and squeeze
And clarify,—refine to proof
The liquor filtered by degrees,
While the world stands aloof.

XII

And there 's the extract, flasked and fine,
And priced and saleable at last !
And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes combine
To paint the future from the past,
Put blue into their line.

XIII

Hobbs hints blue,—straight he turtle eats :
Nobbs prints blue,—claret crowns his cup :
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats,—
Both gorge. Who fished the murex up ?
What porridge had John Keats ?

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA

I

HIST, but a word, fair and soft !

Forth and be judged, Master Hugues !

Answer the question I 've put you so oft :

What do you mean by your mountainous fugues?

See, we 're alone in the loft,—

5

II

I, the poor organist here,

Hugues, the composer of note,

Dead though, and done with, this many a year :

Let 's have a colloquy, something to quote,

Make the world prick up its ear !

10

III

See, the church empties apace :

Fast they extinguish the lights.

Hallo there, sacristan ! Five minutes' grace !

Here 's a crank pedal wants setting to rights,

Baulks one of holding the base.

15

VI

See, our huge house of the sounds,

Hushing its hundreds at once,

Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds !

—O you may challenge them, not a response

Get the church-saints on their rounds !

20

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA

V

(Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt?
—March, with the moon to admire,
Up nave, down chancel, turn transept about,
Supervise all betwixt pavement and spire,
Put rats and mice to the rout—

25

VI

Aloys and Jurien and Just—
Order things back to their place,
Have a sharp eye lest the candlesticks rust,
Rub the church-plate, darn the sacrament-lace,
Clear the desk-velvet of dust.)

30

VII

Here 's your book, younger folks shelve!
Played I not off-hand and runningly,
Just now, your masterpiece, hard number twelve?
Here 's what should strike, could one handle
it cunningly:
Help the axe, give it a helve!

35

VIII

Page after page as I played,
Every bar's rest, where one wipes
Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and surveyed,
O'er my three claviers, yon forest of pipes
Whence you still peeped in the shade.

40

IX

Sure you were wishful to speak?
You, with brow ruled like a score,
Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek,
Like two great breves, as they wrote them of
yore,
Each side that bar, your straight beak!

45

DRAMATIC LYRICS

X

Sure you said—"Good, the mere notes !
"Still, couldst thou take my intent,
"Know what procured me our Company's votes—
"A master were lauded and sciolists shent,
"Parted the sheep from the goats !" 50

XI

Well then, speak up, never flinch !
Quick, ere my candle 's a snuff
—Burnt, do you see ? to its uttermost inch—
I believe in you, but that 's not enough :
Give my conviction a clinch ! 55

XII

First you deliver your phrase
—Nothing propound, that I see,
Fit in itself for much blame or much praise—
Answered no less, where no answer needs be :
Off start the Two on their ways. 60

XIII

Straight must a Third interpose,
Volunteer needlessly help ;
In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his nose,
So the cry 's open, the kennel 's a-yelp,
Argument 's hot to the close. 65

XIV

One dissertates, he is candid ;
Two must discept,—has distinguished ;
Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did ;
Four protests ; Five makes a dart at the thing
wished :
Back to One, goes the case bandied. 70

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA

XV

One says his say with a difference ;
More of expounding, explaining !
All now is wrangle, abuse, and vociferance ;
Now there 's a truce, all 's subdued, self-restraining :
Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence. 75

XVI

One is incisive, corrosive ;
Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant ;
Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive ;
Four overbears them all, strident and strepitant :
Five . . . O Danaides, O Sieve ! 80

XVII

Now, they ply axes and crowbars ;
Now, they prick pins at a tissue
Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's
Worked on the bone of a lie. To what issue ?
Where is our gain at the Two-bars ? 85

XVIII

Est fuga, volvitur rota.
On we drift : where looms the dim port ?
One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute their quota ;
Something is gained, if one caught but the import—
Show it us, Hugues of Saxe-Gotha ! 90

XIX

What with affirming, denying,
Holding, risposting, subjoining,
All 's like . . . it 's like . . . for an instance I 'm
trying . . .
There ! See our roof, its gilt moulding and
groining
Under those spider-webs lying ! 95

DRAMATIC LYRICS

XX

So your fugue broadens and thickens,
Greatens and deepens and lengthens,
Till we exclaim—"But where's music, the dickens?
"Blot ye the gold, while your spider-web
strengthens
"—Blacked to the stoutest of tickens?"

100

XXI

I for man's effort am zealous :
Prove me such censure unfounded !
Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous—
Hopes 't was for something, his organ-pipes
sounded,
Tiring three boys at the bellows?

105

XXII

Is it your moral of Life ?
Such a web, simple and subtle,
Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,
Backward and forward each throwing his shuttle,
Death ending all with a knife ?

110

XXIII

Over our heads truth and nature—
Still our life's zigzags and dodges,
Ins and outs, weaving a new legislature—
God's gold just shining its last where that lodges,
Palled beneath man's usurpature.

115

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA

XXIV

So we o'ershroud stars and roses,
Cherub and trophy and garland ;
Nothings grow something which quietly closes
Heaven's earnest eye : not a glimpse of the far
land
Gets through our comments and glozes.

120

XXV

Ah but traditions, inventions,
(Say we and make up a visage)
So many men with such various intentions,
Down the past ages, must know more than this
age !
Leave we the web its dimensions !

125

XXVI

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf,
Proved a mere mountain in labour ?
Better submit ; try again ; what 's the clef ?
'Faith, 't is no trifle for pipe and for tabor—
Four flats, the minor in F.

130

XXVII

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger :
Learning it once, who would lose it ?
Yet all the while a misgiving will linger,
Truth 's golden o'er us although we refuse it—
Nature, thro' cobwebs we string her.

135

DRAMATIC LYRICS

XXVIII

Hugues! I advise *meâ pœnâ*
(Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)
Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear the arena!
Say the word, straight I unstop the full-organ,
Blare out the *mode Palestrina*.

140

XXIX

While in the roof, if I 'm right there,
. . . Lo you, the wick in the socket!
Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there!
Down it dips, gone like a rocket.
What, you want, do you, to come unawares,
Sweeping the church up for first morning-prayers,
And find a poor devil has ended his cares
At the foot of your rotten-runged rat-riddled stairs?
Do I carry the moon in my pocket?

145

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

I

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon :
A mile or so away,
On a little mound, Napoleon
Stood on our storming-day ;
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
Legs wide, arms locked behind,
As if to balance the prone brow
Oppressive with its mind.

II

Just as perhaps he mused “ My plans
“ That soar, to earth may fall,
“ Let once my army-leader Lannes
“ Waver at yonder wall, ”—
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
A rider, bound on bound
Full-galloping ; nor bridle drew
Until he reached the mound.

III

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy :
You hardly could suspect—

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

(So tight he kept his lips compressed,
Scarce any blood came through)
You looked twice ere you saw his breast
Was all but shot in two.

IV

“Well,” cried he, “Emperor, by God’s grace
“We’ve got you Ratisbon !
“The Marshal’s in the market-place,
“And you’ll be there anon
“To see your flag-bird flap his vans
“Where I, to heart’s desire,
“Perched him !” The chief’s eye flashed ; his
plans
Soared up again like fire.

V

The chief’s eye flashed ; but presently
Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother-eagle’s eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes ;
“You’re wounded !” “Nay,” the soldier’s pride
Touched to the quick, he said :
“I’m killed, Sire !” And his chief beside
Smiling the boy fell dead.

THE PATRIOT

AN OLD STORY

I

It was roses, roses, all the way,
With myrtle mixed in my path like mad :
The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,
The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,
A year ago on this very day.

II

The air broke into a mist with bells,
The old walls rocked with the crowd and cries.
Had I said, "Good folk, mere noise repels—
"But give me your sun from yonder skies!"
They had answered, "And afterward, what else?"

III

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun
To give it my loving friends to keep!
Nought man could do, have I left undone :
And you see my harvest, what I reap
This very day, now a year is run.

IV

There 's nobody on the house-tops now—
Just a palsied few at the windows set ;
For the best of the sight is, all allow,
At the Shambles' Gate—or, better yet,
By the very scaffold's foot, I trow.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

V

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,
A rope cuts both my wrists behind ;
And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds,
For they fling, whoever has a mind,
Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.

VI

Thus I entered, and thus I go !
In triumphs, people have dropped down dead.
“Paid by the world, what dost thou owe
“Me?”—God might question ; now instead,
'T is God shall repay : I am safer so.

MY LAST DUCHESS

FERRARA

THAT 's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now : Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will 't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there ; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 't was not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek : perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps
"Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
"Must never hope to reproduce the faint
"Half-flush that dies along her throat" : such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed ; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 't was all one ! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good !
but thanked

Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who 'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
"Or that in you disgusts me ; here you miss,
"Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
—E'en then would be some stooping ; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her ; but who passed without
Much the same smile ? This grew ; I gave com-
mands ;

Then all smiles stopped together. There she
stands

As if alive. Will 't please you rise ? We 'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed ;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we 'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me !

COUNT GISMOND

AIX IN PROvence

I

CHRIST God who savest man, save most
Of men Count Gismond who saved me !
Count Gauthier, when he chose his post,
Chose time and place and company
To suit it ; when he struck at length 5
My honour, 't was with all his strength.

II

And doubtlessly ere he could draw
All points to one, he must have schemed !
That miserable morning saw
Few half so happy as I seemed, 10
While being dressed in queen's array
To give our tourney prize away.

III

I thought they loved me, did me grace
To please themselves ; 't was all their deed ;
God makes, or fair or foul, our face ; 15
If showing mine so caused to bleed
My cousins' hearts, they should have dropped
A word, and straight the play had stopped.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

IV

They, too, so beauteous ! Each a queen
By virtue of her brow and breast ; 20
Not needing to be crowned, I mean,
As I do. E'en when I was dressed,
Had either of them spoke, instead
Of glancing sideways with still head !

V

But no : they let me laugh, and sing 25
My birthday song quite through, adjust
The last rose in my garland, fling
A last look on the mirror, trust
My arms to each an arm of theirs,
And so descend the castle-stairs— 30

VI

And come out on the morning-troop
Of merry friends who kissed my cheek,
And called me queen, and made me stoop
Under the canopy—(a streak
That pierced it, of the outside sun, 35
Powdered with gold its gloom's soft dun)—

VII

And they could let me take my state
And foolish throne amid applause
Of all come there to celebrate
My queen's-day—Oh I think the cause 40
Of much was, they forgot no crowd
Makes up for parents in their shroud !

COUNT GISMOND

VIII

However that be, all eyes were bent
Upon me, when my cousins cast
Theirs down ; 't was time I should present 45
The victor's crown, but . . . there, 't will last
No long time . . . the old mist again
Blinds me as then it did. How vain !

IX

See ! Gismond 's at the gate, in talk
With his two boys : I can proceed. 50
Well, at that moment, who should stalk
Forth boldly—to my face, indeed—
But Gauthier, and he thundered "Stay !"
And all stayed. "Bring no crowns, I say !

X

"Bring torches ! Wind the penance-sheet
"About her ! Let her shun the chaste, 55
"Or lay herself before their feet !
"Shall she whose body I embraced
"A night long, queen it in the day ?
"For honour's sake no crowns, I say !" 60

XI

I ? What I answered ? As I live,
I never fancied such a thing
As answer possible to give.
What says the body when they spring
Some monstrous torture-engine's whole 65
Strength on it ? No more says the soul.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

XII

Till out strode Gismond ; then I knew
That I was saved. I never met
His face before, but, at first view,
I felt quite sure that God had set 70
Himself to Satan ; who would spend
A minute's mistrust on the end ?

XIII

He strode to Gauthier, in his throat
Gave him the lie, then struck his mouth
With one back-handed blow that wrote 75
In blood men's verdict there. North, South,
East, West, I looked. The lie was dead,
And damned, and truth stood up instead.

XIV

This glads me most, that I enjoyed
The heart of the joy, with my content 80
In watching Gismond unalloyed
By any doubt of the event :
God took that on him—I was bid
Watch Gismond for my part : I did.

XV

Did I not watch him while he let 85
His armourer just brace his greaves,
Rivet his hauberk, on the fret
The while ! His foot . . . my memory leaves
No least stamp out, nor how anon
He pulled his ringing gauntlets on. 90

COUNT GISMOND

XVI

And e'en before the trumpet's sound
Was finished, prone lay the false knight,
Prone as his lie, upon the ground :
Gismond flew at him, used no sleight
O' the sword, but open-breasted drove, 95
Cleaving till out the truth he clove.

XVII

Which done, he dragged him to my feet
And said "Here die, but end thy breath
"In full confession, lest thou fleet
"From my first, to God's second death ! 100
"Say, hast thou lied ?" And, "I have lied
"To God and her," he said, and died.

XVIII

Then Gismond, kneeling to me, asked
—What safe my heart holds, though no word
Could I repeat now, if I tasked 105
My powers for ever, to a third
Dear even as you are. Pass the rest
Until I sank upon his breast.

XIX

Over my head his arm he flung
Against the world ; and scarce I felt 110
His sword (that dripped by me and swung)
A little shifted in its belt :
For he began to say the while
How South our home lay many a mile.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

XX

So 'mid the shouting multitude 115
We two walked forth to never more
Return. My cousins have pursued
Their life, untroubled as before
I vexed them. Gauthier's dwelling-place
God lighten ! May his soul find grace ! 120

XXI

Our elder boy has got the clear
Great brow ; tho' when his brother's black
Full eye shows scorn, it . . . Gismond here ?
And have you brought my tercel back ?
I just was telling Adela 125
How many birds it struck since May.

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

MORNING, evening, noon and night,
"Praise God !" sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned,
Whereby the daily meal was earned.

Hard he laboured, long and well ;
O'er his work the boy's curls fell.

But ever, at each period,
He stopped and sang, "Praise God !"

Then back again his curls he threw,
And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, "Well done ;
"I doubt not thou art heard, my son :

"As well as if thy voice to-day
"Were praising God, the Pope's great way.

"This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome
"Praises God from Peter's dome."

Said Theocrite, "Would God that I
"Might praise him, that great way, and die !"

Night passed, day shone,
And Theocrite was gone.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

With God a day endures always,
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in heaven, "Nor day nor night
"Now brings the voice of my delight."

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,
Spread his wings and sank to earth ;

Entered, in flesh, the empty cell,
Lived there, and played the craftsman well ;

And morning, evening, noon and night,
Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy, to youth he grew :
The man put off the stripling's hue :

The man matured and fell away
Into the season of decay :

And ever o'er the trade he bent,
And ever lived on earth content.

(He did God's will ; to him, all one
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, "A praise is in mine ear ;
"There is no doubt in it, no fear :

"So sing old worlds, and so
"New worlds that from my footstool go.

"Clearer loves sound other ways :
"I miss my little human praise."

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell
The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'T was Easter Day : he flew to Rome,
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by
The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite :

And all his past career
Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,
Till on his life the sickness weighed ;

And in his cell, when death drew near,
An angel in a dream brought cheer :

And rising from the sickness drear
He grew a priest, and now stood here.

To the East with praise he turned,
And on his sight the angel burned.

" I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell
" And set thee here ; I did not well.

" Vainly I left my angel-sphere,
" Vain was thy dream of many a year.

" Thy voice's praise seemed weak ; it dropped—
" Creation's chorus stopped !

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

“Go back and praise again

“The early way, while I remain.

“With that weak voice of our disdain,

“Take up creation’s pausing strain.

“Back to the cell and poor employ :

“Resume the craftsman and the boy !”

Theocrite grew old at home ;

A new Pope dwelt in Peter’s dome.

One vanished as the other died :

They sought God side by side.

INSTANS TYRANNUS

I

OF the million or two, more or less,
I rule and possess,
One man, for some cause undefined,
Was least to my mind.

II

I struck him, he grovelled of course—
For, what was his force?
I pinned him to earth with my weight
And persistence of hate :
And he lay, would not moan, would not curse,
As his lot might be worse.

III

“Were the object less mean, would he stand
“At the swing of my hand !
“For obscurity helps him and blots
“The hole where he squats.”
So, I set my five wits on the stretch
To inveigle the wretch.
All in vain ! Gold and jewels I threw,
Still he couched there perdue ;
I tempted his blood and his flesh,
Hid in roses my mesh,
Choicest cates and the flagon’s best spilth :
Still he kept to his filth.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

IV

Had he kith now or kin, were access
To his heart, did I press :
Just a son or a mother to seize !
No such booty as these.
Were it simply a friend to pursue
'Mid my million or two,
Who could pay me in person or pelf
What he owes me himself !
No : I could not but smile through my chafe :
For the fellow lay safe
As his mates do, the midge and the nit,
—Through minuteness, to wit.

V

Then a humour more great took its place
At the thought of his face,
The droop, the low cares of the mouth,
The trouble uncouth
'Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain
To put out of its pain.
And, "no !" I admonished myself,
"Is one mocked by an elf,
"Is one baffled by toad or by rat ?
"The gravamen 's in that !
"How the lion, who crouches to suit
"His back to my foot,
"Would admire that I stand in debate !
"But the small turns the great
"If it vexes you,—that is the thing !
"Toad or rat vex the king ?
"Though I waste half my realm to unearth
"Toad or rat, 't is well worth !"

INSTANS TYRANNUS

VI

So, I soberly laid my last plan
To extinguish the man.
Round his creep-hole, with never a break
Ran my fires for his sake ;
Over-head, did my thunder combine
With my underground mine :
Till I looked from my labour content
To enjoy the event.

VII

When sudden . . . how think ye, the end ?
Did I say "without friend" ?
Say rather, from marge to blue marge
The whole sky grew his targe
With the sun's self for visible boss,
While an Arm ran across
Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast
Where the wretch was safe prest !
Do you see ? Just my vengeance complete,
The man sprang to his feet,
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed !
—So, *I* was afraid !

MESMERISM

I

ALL I believed is true !
I am able yet
All I want, to get
By a method as strange as new :
Dare I trust the same to you ? 5

II

If at night, when doors are shut,
And the wood-worm picks,
And the death-watch ticks,
And the bar has a flag of smut,
And a cat 's in the water-butt— 10

III

And the socket floats and flares,
And the house-beams groan,
And a foot unknown
Is surmised on the garret-stairs,
And the locks slip unawares— 15

IV

And the spider, to serve his ends,
By a sudden thread,
Arms and legs outspread,
On the table's midst descends,
Comes to find, God knows what friends !— 20

MESMERISM

V

If since eve drew in, I say,
 I have sat and brought
 (So to speak) my thought
To bear on the woman away,
Till I felt my hair turn grey— 25

VI

Till I seemed to have and hold,
 In the vacancy
 'Twixt the wall and me,
From the hair-plait's chestnut gold
To the foot in its muslin fold— 30

VII

Have and hold, then and there,
 Her, from head to foot,
 Breathing and mute,
Passive and yet aware,
In the grasp of my steady stare— 35

VIII

Hold and have, there and then,
 All her body and soul
 That completes my whole,
All that women add to men,
In the clutch of my steady ken— 40

IX

Having and holding, till
 I imprint her fast
 On the void at last
As the sun does whom he will
By the calotypist's skill— 45

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

X

Then,—if my heart's strength serve
 And through all and each
 Of the veils I reach
To her soul and never swerve,
Knitting an iron nerve— 50

XI

Command her soul to advance
 And inform the shape
 Which has made escape
And before my countenance
Answers me glance for glance— 55

XII

I, still with a gesture fit
 Of my hands that best
 Do my soul's behest,
Pointing the power from it,
While myself do steadfast sit— 60

XIII

Steadfast and still the same
 On my object bent,
 While the hands give vent
To my ardour and my aim
And break into very flame— 65

XIV

Then I reach, I must believe,
 Not her soul in vain,
 For to me again
It reaches, and past retrieve
Is wound in the toils I weave 70

MESMERISM

XV

And must follow as I require,
As befits a thrall,
Bringing flesh and all,
Essence and earth-attire,
To the source of the tractile fire : 75

XVI

Till the house called hers, not mine,
With a growing weight
Seems to suffocate
If she break not its leaden line
And escape from its close confine. 80

XVII

Out of doors into the night !
On to the maze
Of the wild wood-ways,
Not turning to left nor right
From the pathway, blind with sight— 85

XVIII

Making thro' rain and wind
O'er the broken shrubs,
'Twixt the stems and stubs,
With a still, composed, strong mind,
Nor a care for the world behind— 90

XIX

Swifter and still more swift,
As the crowding peace
Doth to joy increase
In the wide blind eyes uplift
Thro' the darkness and the drift ! 95

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

XX

While I—to the shape, I too
 Feel my soul dilate
 Nor a whit abate,
And relax not a gesture due,
As I see my belief come true. 100

XXI

For, there! have I drawn or no
 Life to that lip?
 Do my fingers dip
In a flame which again they throw
On the cheek that breaks a-glow? 105

XXII

Ha! was the hair so first?
 What, unfilleted,
 Made alive, and spread
Through the void with a rich outburst,
Chestnut gold-interspersed? 110

XXIII

Like the doors of a casket-shrine,
 See, on either side,
 Her two arms divide
Till the heart betwixt makes sign,
Take me, for I am thine! 115

XXIV

“Now—now”—the door is heard!
 Hark, the stairs! and near—
 Nearer—and here—
“Now!” and at call the third
She enters without a word. 120

MESMERISM

XXV

On doth she march and on
 To the fancied shape ;
 It is, past escape,
Herself, now : the dream is done
And the shadow and she are one. 125

XXVI

First I will pray. Do Thou
 That ownest the soul,
 Yet wilt grant control
To another, nor disallow
For a time, restrain me now ! 130

XXVII

I admonish me while I may,
 Not to squander guilt,
 Since require Thou wilt
At my hand its price one day !
What the price is, who can say ? 135

THE GLOVE

(PETER RONSARD *loquitur*)

“ HEIGHO ! ” yawned one day King Francis,
“ Distance all value enhances !
“ When a man ’s busy, why, leisure
“ Strikes him as wonderful pleasure :
“ ‘ Faith, and at leisure once is he ? 5
“ Straightway he wants to be busy.
“ Here we ’ve got peace ; and aghast I ’m
“ Caught thinking war the true pastime.
“ Is there a reason in metre ?
“ Give us your speech, master Peter ! ” 10
I who, if mortal dare say so,
Ne’er am at loss with my Naso,
“ Sire, ” I replied, “ joys prove cloudlets :
“ Men are the merest Ixions ” —
Here the King whistled aloud, “ Let ’s 15
“ —Heigho—go look at our lions ! ”
Such are the sorrowful chances
If you talk fine to King Francis.

And so, to the courtyard proceeding,
Our company, Francis was leading, 20
Increased by new followers tenfold
Before he arrived at the penfold ;
Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen
At sunset the western horizon.
And Sir De Lorge pressed ’mid the foremost 25
With the dame he professed to adore most.

THE GLOVE

Oh, what a face ! One by fits eyed
Her, and the horrible pitside ;
For the penfold surrounded a hollow
Which led where the eye scarce dared follow, 30
And shelved to the chamber secluded
Where Bluebeard, the great lion, brooded.
The King hailed his keeper, an Arab
As glossy and black as a scarab,
And bade him make sport and at once stir 35
Up and out of his den the old monster.
They opened a hole in the wire-work
Across it, and dropped there a firework,
And fled : one's heart's beating redoubled ;
A pause, while the pit's mouth was troubled, 40
The blackness and silence so utter,
By the firework's slow sparkling and sputter ;
Then earth in a sudden contortion
Gave out to our gaze her abortion.
Such a brute ! Were I friend Clement Marot 45
(Whose experience of nature 's but narrow,
And whose faculties move in no small mist
When he versifies David the Psalmist)
I should study that brute to describe you
Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu. 50
One's whole blood grew curdling and creepy
To see the black mane, vast and heapy,
The tail in the air stiff and straining,
The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,
As over the barrier which bounded 55
His platform, and us who surrounded
The barrier, they reached and they rested
On space that might stand him in best stead :
For who knew, he thought, what the amazement,
The eruption of clatter and blaze meant, 60
And if, in this minute of wonder,
No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered,
 The lion at last was delivered ?
 Ay, that was the open sky o'erhead ! 65
 And you saw by the flash on his forehead,
 By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,
 He was leagues in the desert already,
 Driving the flocks up the mountain,
 Or catlike couched hard by the fountain 70
 To waylay the date-gathering negress :
 So guarded he entrance or egress.
 "How he stands!" quoth the King : "we may
 well swear,
 ("No novice, we 've won our spurs elsewhere
 "And so can afford the confession,) 75
 "We exercise wholesome discretion
 "In keeping aloof from his threshold ;
 "Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh hold,
 "Their first would too pleasantly purloin
 "The visitor's brisket or surloin : 80
 "But who 's he would prove so fool-hardy ?
 "Not the best man of Marignan, pardie !"

The sentence no sooner was uttered,
 Than over the rails a glove fluttered,
 Fell close to the lion, and rested : 85
 The dame 't was, who flung it and jested
 With life so, De Lorge had been wooing
 For months past ; he sat there pursuing
 His suit, weighing out with nonchalance
 Fine speeches like gold from a balance. 90

Sound the trumpet, no true knight 's a tarrier !
 De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,
 Walked straight to the glove,—while the lion
 Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on
 The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's sapphire, 95

THE GLOVE

And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir,—
Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,
Leaped back where the lady was seated,
And full in the face of its owner
Flung the glove.

“Your heart’s queen, you dethrone her? 100
“So should I!”—cried the King—“’t was mere
vanity,
“Not love, set that task to humanity!”
Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing
From such a proved wolf in sheep’s clothing.

Not so, I ; for I caught an expression 105
In her brow’s undisturbed self-possession
Amid the Court’s scoffing and merriment,—
As if from no pleasing experiment
She rose, yet of pain not much heedful
So long as the process was needful,— 110
As if she had tried in a crucible,
To what “speeches like gold” were reducible,
And, finding the finest prove copper,
Felt the smoke in her face was but proper ;
To know what she had *not* to trust to, 115
Was worth all the ashes and dust too.
She went out ’mid hooting and laughter ;
Clement Marot stayed ; I followed after,
And asked, as a grace, what it all meant ?
If she wished not the rash deed’s recalment ? 120
“For I”—so I spoke—“am a poet :
“Human nature,—behoves that I know it !”

She told me, “Too long had I heard
“Of the deed proved alone by the word :
“For my love—what De Lorge would not dare ! 125
“With my scorn—what De Lorge could compare!

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

" And the endless descriptions of death
 " He would brave when my lip formed a breath,
 " I must reckon as braved, or, of course,
 " Doubt his word—and moreover, perforce, 130
 " For such gifts as no lady could spurn,
 " Must offer my love in return.
 " When I looked on your lion, it brought
 " All the dangers at once to my thought,
 " Encountered by all sorts of men, 135
 " Before he was lodged in his den,—
 " From the poor slave whose club or bare hands
 " Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,
 " With no King and no Court to applaud,
 " By no shame, should he shrink, overawed, 140
 " Yet to capture the creature made shift,
 " That his rude boys might laugh at the gift,
 " —To the page who last leaped o'er the fence
 " Of the pit, on no greater pretence
 " Than to get back the bonnet he dropped, 145
 " Lest his pay for a week should be stopped.
 " So, wiser I judged it to make
 " One trial what 'death for my sake'
 " Really meant, while the power was yet mine,
 " Than to wait until time should define 150
 " Such a phrase not so simply as I,
 " Who took it to mean just 'to die.'
 " The blow a glove gives is but weak :
 " Does the mark yet discolour my cheek ?
 " But when the heart suffers a blow, 155
 " Will the pain pass so soon, do you know ? "

I looked, as away she was sweeping,
 And saw a youth eagerly keeping
 As close as he dared to the doorway.
 No doubt that a noble should more weigh 160
 His life than befits a plebeian ;

THE GLOVE

And yet, had our brute been Nemean—
(I judge by a certain calm fervour
The youth stepped with, forward to serve her)
—He 'd have scarce thought you did him the
 worst turn 165
If you whispered “ Friend, what you 'd get, first
 earn ! ”

And when, shortly after, she carried
Her shame from the Court, and they married,
To that marriage some happiness, maugre
The voice of the Court, I dared augur. 170

For De Lorge, he made women with men vie,
Those in wonder and praise, these in envy ;
And in short stood so plain a head taller
That he wooed and won . . . how do you call her?
The beauty, that rose in the sequel 175
To the King's love, who loved her a week well.
And 't was noticed he never would honour
De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)
With the easy commission of stretching
His legs in the service, and fetching 180
His wife, from her chamber, those straying
Sad gloves she was always mislaying,
While the King took the closet to chat in,—
But of course this adventure came pat in.
And never the King told the story, 185
How bringing a glove brought such glory,
But the wife smiled—“ His nerves are grown
 firmer :
“ Mine he brings now and utters no murmur.”

Venienti occurrite morbo !

With which moral I drop my theorbo. 190

TIME'S REVENGES

I 'VE a Friend, over the sea ;
I like him, but he loves me.
It all grew out of the books I write ;
They find such favour in his sight
That he slaughters you with savage looks
Because you don't admire my books.
He does himself though,—and if some vein
Were to snap to-night in this heavy brain,
To-morrow month, if I lived to try,
Round should I just turn quietly,
Or out of the bedclothes stretch my hand
Till I found him, come from his foreign land
To be my nurse in this poor place,
And make my broth and wash my face
And light my fire and, all the while,
Bear with his old good-humoured smile
That I told him “ Better have kept away
“ Than come and kill me, night and day,
“ With, worse than fever throbs and shoots,
“ The creaking of his clumsy boots.”
I am as sure that this he would do,
As that Saint Paul's is striking two.
And I think I rather . . . woe is me !
—Yes, rather would see him than not see,
If lifting a hand could seat him there
Before me in the empty chair

TIME'S REVENGES

To-night, when my head aches indeed,
And I can neither think nor read
Nor make these purple fingers hold
The pen ; this garret 's freezing cold !

And I 've a Lady—there he wakes,
The laughing fiend and prince of snakes
Within me, at her name, to pray
Fate send some creature in the way
Of my love for her, to be down-torn,
Upthrust and outward-borne,
So I might prove myself that sea
Of passion which I needs must be !
Call my thoughts false and my fancies
quaint

And my style infirm and its figures faint,
All the critics say, and more blame yet,
And not one angry word you get.
But, please you, wonder I would put
My cheek beneath that lady's foot
Rather than trample under mine
The laurels of the Florentine,
And you shall see how the devil spends
A fire God gave for other ends !
I tell you, I stride up and down
This garret, crowned with love's best crown,
And feasted with love's perfect feast,
To think I kill for her, at least,
Body and soul and peace and fame,
Alike youth's end and manhood's aim,
—So is my spirit, as flesh with sin,
Filled full, eaten out and in
With the face of her, the eyes of her,
The lips, the little chin, the stir
Of shadow round her mouth ; and she
—I 'll tell you,—calmly would decree

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

That I should roast at a slow fire,
If that would compass her desire
And make her one whom they invite
To the famous ball to-morrow night.

There may be heaven ; there must be hell ;
Meantime, there is our earth here—well !

THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND

THAT second time they hunted me
From hill to plain, from shore to sea,
And Austria, hounding far and wide
Her blood-hounds thro' the country-side,
Breathed hot and instant on my trace,— 5
I made six days a hiding-place
Of that dry green old aqueduct
Where I and Charles, when boys, have plucked
The fire-flies from the roof above,
Bright creeping thro' the moss they love : 10
—How long it seems since Charles was lost !
Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed
The country in my very sight ;
And when that peril ceased at night,
The sky broke out in red dismay 15
With signal fires ; well, there I lay
Close covered o'er in my recess,
Up to the neck in ferns and cress,
Thinking on Metternich our friend,
And Charles's miserable end, 20
And much beside, two days ; the third,
Hunger o'ercame me when I heard
The peasants from the village go
To work among the maize ; you know,
With us in Lombardy, they bring 25
Provisions packed on mules, a string
With little bells that cheer their task,
And casks, and boughs on every cask

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

To keep the sun's heat from the wine ;
These I let pass in jingling line, 30
And, close on them, dear noisy crew,
The peasants from the village, too ;
For at the very rear would troop
Their wives and sisters in a group
To help, I knew. When these had passed, 35
I threw my glove to strike the last,
Taking the chance : she did not start,
Much less cry out, but stooped apart,
One instant rapidly glanced round,
And saw me beckon from the ground. 40
A wild bush grows and hides my crypt ;
She picked my glove up while she stripped
A branch off, then rejoined the rest
With that ; my glove lay in her breast.
Then I drew breath ; they disappeared : 45
It was for Italy I feared.

An hour, and she returned alone
Exactly where my glove was thrown.
Meanwhile came many thoughts : on me
Rested the hopes of Italy. 50
I had devised a certain tale
Which, when 't was told her, could not fail
Persuade a peasant of its truth ;
I meant to call a freak of youth
This hiding, and give hopes of pay, 55
And no temptation to betray.
But when I saw that woman's face,
Its calm simplicity of grace,
Our Italy's own attitude
In which she walked thus far, and stood, 60
Planting each naked foot so firm,
To crush the snake and spare the worm—
At first sight of her eyes, I said,

THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND

" I am that man upon whose head
 " They fix the price, because I hate 65
 " The Austrians over us : the State
 " Will give you gold—oh, gold so much !—
 " If you betray me to their clutch,
 " And be your death, for aught I know,
 " If once they find you saved their foe. 70
 " Now, you must bring me food and drink,
 " And also paper, pen and ink,
 " And carry safe what I shall write
 " To Padua, which you 'll reach at night
 " Before the duomo shuts ; go in, 75
 " And wait till Tenebræ begin ;
 " Walk to the third confessional,
 " Between the pillar and the wall,
 " And kneeling whisper, *Whence comes peace ?*
 " Say it a second time, then cease ; 80
 " And if the voice inside returns,
 " *From Christ and Freedom ; what concerns*
 " *The cause of Peace ?*—for answer, slip
 " My letter where you placed your lip ;
 " Then come back happy we have done 85
 " Our mother service—I, the son,
 " As you the daughter of our land ! "

Three mornings more, she took her stand
 In the same place, with the same eyes :
 I was no surer of sun-rise 90
 Than of her coming. We conferred
 Of her own prospects, and I heard
 She had a lover—stout and tall,
 She said—then let her eyelids fall,
 " He could do much "—as if some doubt 95
 Entered her heart,—then, passing out,
 " She could not speak for others, who
 " Had other thoughts ; herself she knew " :

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

And so she brought me drink and food.
After four days, the scouts pursued 100
Another path ; at last arrived
The help my Paduan friends contrived
To furnish me : she brought the news.
For the first time I could not choose
But kiss her hand, and lay my own 105
Upon her head—" This faith was shown
" To Italy, our mother ; she
" Uses my hand and blesses thee."
She followed down to the sea-shore ;
I left and never saw her more. 110

How very long since I have thought
Concerning—much less wished for—aught
Beside the good of Italy,
For which I live and mean to die !
I never was in love ; and since 115
Charles proved false, what shall now convince
My inmost heart I have a friend ?
However, if I pleased to spend
Real wishes on myself—say, three—
I know at least what one should be. 120
I would grasp Metternich until
I felt his red wet throat distil
In blood thro' these two hands. And next,
—Nor much for that am I perplexed—
Charles, perjured traitor, for his part, 125
Should die slow of a broken heart
Under his new employers. Last
—Ah, there, what should I wish ? For fast
Do I grow old and out of strength.
If I resolved to seek at length 130
My father's house again, how scared
They all would look, and unprepared !
My brothers live in Austria's pay

THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND

—Disowned me long ago, men say ;
And all my early mates who used 135
To praise me so—perhaps induced
More than one early step of mine—
Are turning wise : while some opine
“ Freedom grows license,” some suspect
“ Haste breeds delay,” and recollect 140
They always said, such premature
Beginnings never could endure !
So, with a sullen “ All ’s for best,”
The land seems settling to its rest.
I think then, I should wish to stand 145
This evening in that dear, lost land,
Over the sea the thousand miles,
And know if yet that woman smiles
With the calm smile ; some little farm
She lives in there, no doubt : what harm 150
If I sat on the door-side bench,
And, while her spindle made a trench
Fantastically in the dust,
Inquired of all her fortunes—just
Her children’s ages and their names, 155
And what may be the husband’s aims
For each of them. I ’d talk this out,
And sit there, for an hour about,
Then kiss her hand once more, and lay
Mine on her head, and go my way. 160

So much for idle wishing—how
It steals the time ! To business now.

THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY

PIANO DI SORRENTO

FORTÙ, Fortù, my beloved one,
Sit here by my side,
On my knees put up both little feet !
I was sure, if I tried,
I could make you laugh spite of Scirocco. 5
Now, open your eyes,
Let me keep you amused till he vanish
In black from the skies,
With telling my memories over
As you tell your beads ; 10
All the Plain saw me gather, I garland
—The flowers or the weeds.

Time for rain ! for your long hot dry Autumn
Had net-worked with brown
The white skin of each grape on the bunches, 15
Marked like a quail's crown,
Those creatures you make such account of,
Whose heads,—speckled white
Over brown like a great spider's back,
As I told you last night,— 20
Your mother bites off for her supper.
Red-ripe as could be,
Pomegranates were chapping and splitting
In halves on the tree :

THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY

And betwixt the loose walls of great flintstone, 25
Or in the thick dust
On the path, or straight out of the rock-side,
Wherever could thrust
Some burnt sprig of bold hardy rock-flower
Its yellow face up, 30
For the prize were great butterflies fighting,
Some five for one cup.
So, I guessed, ere I got up this morning,
What change was in store,
By the quick rustle-down of the quail-nets 35
Which woke me before
I could open my shutter, made fast
With a bough and a stone,
And look thro' the twisted dead vine-twigs,
Sole lattice that 's known. 40
Quick and sharp rang the rings down the net-poles,
While, busy beneath,
Your priest and his brother tugged at them,
The rain in their teeth.
And out upon all the flat house-roofs 45
Where split figs lay drying,
The girls took the frails under cover :
Nor use seemed in trying
To get out the boats and go fishing,
For, under the cliff, 50
Fierce the black water frothed o'er the blind-rock.
No seeing our skiff
Arrive about noon from Amalfi,
—Our fisher arrive,
And pitch down his basket before us, 55
All trembling alive
With pink and grey jellies, your sea-fruit ;
You touch the strange lumps,
And mouths gape there, eyes open, all manner
Of horns and of humps, 60

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

Which only the fisher looks grave at,
While round him like imps
Cling screaming the children as naked
And brown as his shrimps ;
Himself too as bare to the middle 65
—You see round his neck
The string and its brass coin suspended,
That saves him from wreck.
But to-day not a boat reached Salerno,
So back, to a man, 70
Came our friends, with whose help in the vineyards
Grape-harvest began.
In the vat, halfway up in our house-side,
Like blood the juice spins,
While your brother all bare-legged is dancing 75
Till breathless he grins
Dead-beaten in effort on effort
To keep the grapes under,
Since still when he seems all but master,
In pours the fresh plunder 80
From girls who keep coming and going
With basket on shoulder,
And eyes shut against the rain's driving ;
Your girls that are older,—
For under the hedges of aloe, 85
And where, on its bed
Of the orchard's black mould, the love-apple
Lies pulpy and red,
All the young ones are kneeling and filling
Their laps with the snails 90
Tempted out by this first rainy weather,—
Your best of regales,
As to-night will be proved to my sorrow,
When, supping in state,
We shall feast our grape-gleaners (two dozen, 95
Three over one plate)

THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY

With lasagne so tempting to swallow
In slippery ropes,
And gourds fried in great purple slices,
That colour of popes. 100
Meantime, see the grape bunch they 've brought
you :
The rain-water slips
O'er the heavy blue bloom on each globe
Which the wasp to your lips
Still follows with fretful persistence : 105
Nay, taste, while awake,
This half of a curd-white smooth cheese-ball
That peals, flake by flake,
Like an onion, each smoother and whiter ;
Next, sip this weak wine 110
From the thin green glass flask, with its stopper,
A leaf of the vine ;
And end with the prickly-pear's red flesh
That leaves thro' its juice
The stony black seeds on your pearl-teeth. 115
Scirocco is loose !
Hark, the quick, whistling pelt of the olives
Which, thick in one's track,
Tempt the stranger to pick up and bite them,
Tho' not yet half black ! 120
How the old twisted olive trunks shudder,
The medlars let fall
Their hard fruit, and the brittle great fig-trees
Snap off, figs and all,
For here comes the whole of the tempest ! 125
No refuge, but creep
Back again to my side and my shoulder,
And listen or sleep.

O how will your country show next week,
When all the vine-boughs 130

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

Have been stripped of their foliage to pasture
 The mules and the cows ?
 Last eve, I rode over the mountains ;
 Your brother, my guide,
 Soon left me, to feast on the myrtles 135
 That offered, each side,
 Their fruit-balls, black, glossy and luscious,—
 Or strip from the sorbs
 A treasure, or, rosy and wondrous,
 Those hairy gold orbs ! 140
 But my mule picked his sure sober path out,
 Just stopping to neigh
 When he recognized down in the valley
 His mates on their way
 With the faggots and barrels of water ; 145
 And soon we emerged
 From the plain, where the woods could scarce
 follow ;
 And still as we urged
 Our way, the woods wondered, and left us,
 As up still we trudged 150
 Though the wild path grew wilder each instant,
 And place was e'en grudged
 'Mid the rock-chasms and piles of loose stones
 Like the loose broken teeth
 Of some monster which climbed there to die 155
 From the ocean beneath—
 Place was grudged to the silver-grey fume-
 weed
 That clung to the path,
 And dark rosemary ever a-dying
 That, 'spite the wind's wrath, 160
 So loves the salt rock's face to seaward,
 And lentisks as staunch
 To the stone where they root and bear berries,
 And . . . what shows a branch

THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY

Coral-coloured, transparent, with circlets 165
 Of pale seagreen leaves ;
 Over all trod my mule with the caution
 Of gleaners o'er sheaves,
 Still, foot after foot like a lady,
 Till, round after round, 170
 He climbed to the top of Calvano,
 And God's own profound
 Was above me, and round me the mountains,
 And under, the sea,
 And within me my heart to bear witness 175
 What was and shall be.
 Oh, heaven and the terrible crystal !
 No rampart excludes
 Your eye from the life to be lived
 In the blue solitudes. 180
 Oh, those mountains, their infinite movement !
 Still moving with you ;
 For, ever some new head and breast of them
 Thrust into view
 To observe the intruder ; you see it 185
 If quickly you turn
 And, before they escape you, surprise them.
 They grudge you should learn
 How the soft plains they look on, lean over
 And love (they pretend) 190
 —Cower beneath them, the flat sea-pine crouches,
 The wild fruit-trees bend,
 E'en the myrtle-leaves curl, shrink and shut :
 All is silent and grave :
 'T is a sensual and timorous beauty, 195
 How fair ! but a slave.
 So, I turned to the sea ; and there slumbered
 As greenly as ever
 Those isles of the siren, your Galli ;
 No ages can sever 200

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

The Three, nor enable their sister
To join them,—halfway
On the voyage, she looked at Ulysses—
No farther to-day,
Tho' the small one, just launched in the wave, 205
Watches breast-high and steady
From under the rock, her bold sister
Swum halfway already.
Fortù, shall we sail there together
And see from the sides 210
Quite new rocks show their faces, new haunts
Where the siren abides?
Shall we sail round and round them, close
over
The rocks, tho' unseen,
That ruffle the grey glassy water 215
To glorious green?
Then scramble from splinter to splinter,
Reach land and explore,
On the largest, the strange square black turret
With never a door, 220
Just a loop to admit the quick lizards ;
Then, stand there and hear
The birds' quiet singing, that tells us
What life is, so clear?
—The secret they sang to Ulysses 225
When, ages ago,
He heard and he knew this life's secret
I hear and I know.

Ah, see! The sun breaks o'er Calvano ;
He strikes the great gloom 230
And flutters it o'er the mount's summit
In airy gold fume.
All is over. Look out, see the gipsy,
Our tinker and smith,

THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY

Has arrived, set up bellows and forge, 235
And down-squatted forthwith
To his hammering, under the wall there ;
One eye keeps aloof
The urchins that itch to be putting
His jews'-harps to proof, 240
While the other, thro' locks of curled wire,
Is watching how sleek
Shines the hog, come to share in the windfall
—Chew, abbot's own cheek !
All is over. Wake up and come out now, 245
And down let us go,
And see the fine things got in order
At church for the show
Of the Sacrament, set forth this evening.
To-morrow 's the Feast 250
Of the Rosary's Virgin, by no means
Of Virgins the least,
As you 'll hear in the off-hand discourse
Which (all nature, no art)
The Dominican brother, these three weeks, 255
Was getting by heart.
Not a pillar nor post but is dizen'd
With red and blue papers ;
All the roof waves with ribbons, each altar
A-blaze with long tapers ; 260
But the great masterpiece is the scaffold
Rigged glorious to hold
All the fiddlers and fifers and drummers
And trumpeters bold,
Not afraid of Bellini nor Auber, 265
Who, when the priest 's hoarse,
Will strike us up something that 's brisk
For the feast's second course.
And then will the flaxen-wigged Image
Be carried in pomp 270

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

Thro' the plain, while in gallant procession
The priests mean to stomp.
All round the glad church lie old bottles
With gunpowder stopped,
Which will be, when the Image re-enters, 275
Religiously popped ;
And at night from the crest of Calvano
Great bonfires will hang,
On the plain will the trumpets join chorus,
And more poppers bang. 280
At all events, come—to the garden
As far as the wall ;
See me tap with a hoe on the plaster
Till out there shall fall
A scorpion with wide angry nippers ! 285

—“ Such trifles ! ” you say ?
Fortù, in my England at home,
Men meet gravely to-day
And debate, if abolishing Corn-laws
Be righteous and wise 290
—If 't were proper, Scirocco should vanish
In black from the skies !

IN A GONDOLA

He sings

I SEND my heart up to thee, all my heart
In this my singing.
For the stars help me, and the sea bears part ;
The very night is clinging
Closer to Venice' streets to leave one space 5
Above me, whence thy face
May light my joyous heart to thee its dwelling-
place.

She speaks

Say after me, and try to stay
My very words, as if each word
Came from you of your own accord, 10
In your own voice, in your own way :
"This woman's heart and soul and brain
"Are mine as much as this gold chain
"She bids me wear ; which " (say again)
"I choose to make by cherishing 15
"A precious thing, or choose to fling
"Over the boat-side, ring by ring."
And yet once more say . . . no word more !
Since words are only words. Give o'er !

Unless you call me, all the same, 20
Familiarly by my pet name,

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

Which if the Three should hear you call,
And me reply to, would proclaim
At once our secret to them all.
Ask of me, too, command me, blame— 25
Do, break down the partition-wall
'Twixt us, the daylight world beholds
Curtained in dusk and splendid folds !
What 's left but—all of me to take ?
I am the Three's : prevent them, slake 30
Your thirst ! 'T is said, the Arab sage,
In practising with gems, can loose
Their subtle spirit in his cruce
And leave but ashes : so, sweet mage,
Leave them my ashes when thy use 35
Sucks out my soul, thy heritage !

He sings

I

Past we glide, and past, and past !
What 's that poor Agnese doing
Where they make the shutters fast ?
Grey Zanobi 's just a-wooing 40
To his couch the purchased bride :
Past we glide !

II

Past we glide, and past, and past !
Why 's the Pucci Palace flaring
Like a beacon to the blast ? 45
Guests by hundreds, not one caring
If the dear host's neck were wried :
Past we glide !

IN A GONDOLA

She sings

I

The moth's kiss, first !
Kiss me as if you made believe 50
You were not sure, this eve,
How my face, your flower, had pursed
Its petals up ; so, here and there
You brush it, till I grow aware
Who wants me, and wide ope I burst. 55

II

The bee's kiss, now !
Kiss me as if you entered gay
My heart at some noonday,
A bud that dares not disallow
The claim, so all is rendered up, 60
And passively its shattered cup
Over your head to sleep I bow.

He sings

I

What are we two ?
I am a Jew,
And carry thee, farther than friends can pursue, 65
To a feast of our tribe ;
Where they need thee to bribe
The devil that blasts them unless he imbibe
Thy . . . Scatter the vision for ever ! And now,
As of old, I am I, thou art thou ! 70

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

II

Say again, what we are ?
The sprite of a star,
I lure thee above where the destinies bar
My plumes their full play
Till a ruddier ray 75
Than my pale one announce there is withering
away
Some . . . Scatter the vision for ever ! And now,
As of old, I am I, thou art thou !

He muses

Oh, which were best, to roam or rest ?
The land's lap or the water's breast ? 80
To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,
Or swim in lucid shallows just
Eluding water-lily leaves,
An inch from Death's black fingers, thrust
To lock you, whom release he must ; 85
Which life were best on Summer eves ?

He speaks, musing

Lie back ; could thought of mine improve you ?
From this shoulder let there spring
A wing ; from this, another wing ;
Wings, not legs and feet, shall move you ! 90
Snow-white must they spring, to blend
With your flesh, but I intend
They shall deepen to the end,
Broader, into burning gold,
Till both wings crescent-wise enfold 95
Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet
To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet
As if a million sword-blades hurled
Defiance from you to the world !

IN A GONDOLA

Rescue me thou, the only real ! 100
And scare away this mad ideal
That came, nor motions to depart !
Thanks ! Now, stay ever as thou art !

Still he muses

I

What if the Three should catch at last
Thy serenader ? While there 's cast 105
Paul's cloak about my head, and fast
Gian pinions me, Himself has past
His stylet thro' my back ; I reel ;
And . . . is it thou I feel ?

II

They trail me, these three godless knaves, 110
Past every church that sains and saves,
Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves
By Lido's wet accursed graves,
They scoop mine, roll me to its brink,
And . . . on thy breast I sink ! 115

She replies, musing

Dip your arm o'er the boat-side, elbow-deep,
As I do : thus : were death so unlike sleep,
Caught this way ? Death 's to fear from flame or
steel,
Or poison doubtless ; but from water—feel !

Go find the bottom ! Would you stay me ? There ! 120
Now pluck a great blade of that ribbon-grass
To plait in where the foolish jewel was,
I flung away : since you have praised my hair,
'T is proper to be choice in what I wear.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

He speaks

Row home? must we row home? Too surely 125
Know I where its front 's demurely
Over the Giudecca piled ;
Window just with window mating,
Door on door exactly waiting,
All 's the set face of a child : 130
But behind it, where 's a trace
Of the staidness and reserve,
And formal lines without a curve,
In the same child's playing-face?
No two windows look one way 135
O'er the small sea-water thread
Below them. Ah, the autumn day
I, passing, saw you overhead !
First, out a cloud of curtain blew,
Then a sweet cry, and last came you— 140
To catch your lory that must needs
Escape just then, of all times then,
To peck a tall plant's fleecy seeds,
And make me happiest of men.
I scarce could breathe to see you reach 145
So far back o'er the balcony
To catch him ere he climbed too high
Above you in the Smyrna peach,
That quick the round smooth cord of gold,
This coiled hair on your head, unrolled, 150
Fell down you like a gorgeous snake
The Roman girls were wont, of old,
When Rome there was, for coolness' sake
To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.
Dear lory, may his beak retain 155
Ever its delicate rose stain
As if the wounded lotus-blossoms
Had marked their thief to know again !

IN A GONDOLA

Stay longer yet, for others' sake
Than mine ! What should your chamber do ? 160
—With all its rarities that ache
In silence while day lasts, but wake
At night-time and their life renew,
Suspended just to pleasure you
Who brought against their will together 165
These objects, and, while day lasts, weave
Around them such a magic tether
That dumb they look : your harp, believe,
With all the sensitive tight strings
Which dare not speak, now to itself 170
Breathes slumberously, as if some elf
Went in and out the chords, his wings
Make murmur wheresoe'er they graze,
As an angel may, between the maze
Of midnight palace-pillars, on 175
And on, to sow God's plagues, have gone
Through guilty glorious Babylon.
And while such murmurs flow, the nymph
Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell
As the dry limpet for the lymph 180
Come with a tune he knows so well.
And how your statues' hearts must swell !
And how your pictures must descend
To see each other, friend with friend !
Oh, could you take them by surprise, 185
You 'd find Schidone's eager Duke
Doing the quaintest courtesies
To that prim saint by Haste-thee-Luke !
And, deeper into her rock den,
Bold Castelfranco's Magdalen 190
You 'd find retreated from the ken
Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser—
As if the Tizian thinks of her,
And is not, rather, gravely bent

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

On seeing for himself what toys 195
Are these, his progeny invent,
What litter now the board employs
Whereon he signed a document
That got him murdered ! Each enjoys
Its night so well, you cannot break 200
The sport up, so, indeed must make
More stay with me, for others' sake.

She speaks

I

To-morrow, if a harp-string, say,
Is used to tie the jasmine back
That overflows my room with sweets, 205
Contrive your Zorzi somehow meets
My Zanze ! If the ribbon 's black,
The Three are watching : keep away !

II

Your gondola—let Zorzi wreath
A mesh of water-weeds about 210
Its prow, as if he unaware
Had struck some quay or bridge-foot stair !
That I may throw a paper out
As you and he go underneath.

There 's Zanze's vigilant taper ; safe are we. 215
Only one minute more to-night with me ?
Resume your past self of a month ago !
Be you the bashful gallant, I will be
The lady with the colder breast than snow.
Now bow you, as becomes, nor touch my hand 220
More than I touch yours when I step to land,
And say, " All thanks, Siora ! "—

Heart to heart

IN A GONDOLA

And lips to lips ! Yet once more, ere we part,
Clasp me and make me thine, as mine thou art !

[He is surprised, and stabbed.]

It was ordained to be so, sweet !—and best 225

Comes now, beneath thine eyes, upon thy breast.

Still kiss me ! Care not for the cowards ! Care

Only to put aside thy beauteous hair

My blood will hurt ! The Three, I do not scorn

To death, because they never lived : but I 230

Have lived indeed, and so—(yet one more kiss)—
can die !

WARING

I

I

WHAT's become of Waring
Since he gave us all the slip,
Chose land-travel or seafaring,
Boots and chest or staff and scrip,
Rather than pace up and down
Any longer London town? 5

II

Who 'd have guessed it from his lip
Or his brow's accustomed bearing,
On the night he thus took ship
Or started landward?—little caring 10
For us, it seems, who supped together
(Friends of his too, I remember)
And walked home thro' the merry weather,
The snowiest in all December.
I left his arm that night myself 15
For what's-his-name's, the new prose-poet
Who wrote the book there, on the shelf—
How, forsooth, was I to know it
If Waring meant to glide away
Like a ghost at break of day? 20
Never looked he half so gay!

WARING

III

He was prouder than the devil :
How he must have cursed our revel !
Ay and many other meetings,
Indoor visits, outdoor greetings, 25
As up and down he paced this London,
With no work done, but great works undone,
Where scarce twenty knew his name.
Why not, then, have earlier spoken,
Written, bustled ? Who 's to blame 30
If your silence kept unbroken ?
" True, but there were sundry jottings,
" Stray-leaves, fragments, blurs and blottings,
" Certain first steps were achieved
" Already which "—(is that your meaning ?) 35
" Had well borne out whoe'er believed
" In more to come ! " But who goes gleaning
Hedgeside chance-blades, while full-sheaved
Stand cornfields by him ? Pride, o'erweening
Pride alone, puts forth such claims 40
O'er the day's distinguished names.

IV

Meantime, how much I loved him,
I find out now I 've lost him.
I who cared not if I moved him,
Who could so carelessly accost him, 45
Henceforth never shall get free
Of his ghostly company,
His eyes that just a little wink
As deep I go into the merit
Of this and that distinguished spirit— 50
His cheeks' raised colour, soon to sink,
As long I dwell on some stupendous

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

And tremendous (Heaven defend us !)
Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrend-ous
Demoniac-seraphic 55
Penman's latest piece of graphic.
Nay, my very wrist grows warm
With his dragging weight of arm.
E'en so, swimmingly appears,
Through one's after-supper musings, 60
Some lost lady of old years
With her beauteous vain endeavour
And goodness unrepaid as ever ;
The face, accustomed to refusings,
We, puppies that we were . . . Oh never 65
Surely, nice of conscience, scrupled
Being aught like false, forsooth, to ?
Telling aught but honest truth to ?
What a sin, had we centupled
Its possessor's grace and sweetness ! 70
No ! she heard in its completeness
Truth, for truth 's a weighty matter,
And, truth at issue, we can't flatter !
Well, 't is done with ; she 's exempt
From damning us thro' such a sally ; 75
And so she glides, as down a valley,
Taking up with her contempt,
Past our reach ; and in, the flowers
Shut her unregarded hours.

v

Oh, could I have him back once more, 80
This Waring, but one half-day more !
Back, with the quiet face of yore,
So hungry for acknowledgment
Like mine ! I 'd fool him to his bent.
Feed, should not he, to heart's content ? 85
I 'd say, "to only have conceived,

WARING

“Planned your great works, apart from progress,
“Surpasses little works achieved !”
I’d lie so, I should be believed.
I’d make such havoc of the claims 90
Of the day’s distinguished names
To feast him with, as feasts an ogress
Her feverish sharp-toothed gold-crowned child !
Or as one feasts a creature rarely
Captured here, unreconciled 95
To capture ; and completely gives
Its pettish humours license, barely
Requiring that it lives.

VI

Ichabod, Ichabod,
The glory is departed ! 100
Travels Waring East away ?
Who, of knowledge, by hearsay,
Reports a man upstarted
Somewhere as a god,
Hordes grown European-hearted, 105
Millions of the wild made tame
On a sudden at his fame ?
In Vishnu-land what Avatar ?
Or who in Moscow, toward the Czar,
With the demurest of footfalls 110
Over the Kremlin’s pavement bright
With serpentine and syenite,
Steps, with five other Generals
That simultaneously take snuff,
For each to have pretext enough 115
And kerchiefwise unfold his sash
Which, softness’ self, is yet the stuff
To hold fast where a steel chain snaps,
And leave the grand white neck no gash ?
Waring in Moscow, to those rough 120

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

Cold northern natures borne perhaps,
 Like the lambwhite maiden dear
 From the circle of mute kings
 Unable to repress the tear,
 Each as his sceptre down he flings, 125
 To Dian's fane at Taurica,
 Where now a captive priestess, she alway
 Mingles her tender grave Hellenic speech
 With theirs, tuned to the hailstone-beaten beach
 As pours some pigeon, from the myrrhy lands 130
 Rapt by the whirlblast to fierce Scythian strands
 Where breed the swallows, her melodious cry
 Amid their barbarous twitter !
 In Russia? Never ! Spain were fitter !
 Ay, most likely 't is in Spain 135
 That we and Waring meet again
 Now, while he turns down that cool narrow lane
 Into the blackness, out of grave Madrid
 All fire and shine, abrupt as when there 's slid
 Its stiff gold blazing pall 140
 From some black coffin-lid.
 Or, best of all,
 I love to think
 The leaving us was just a feint ;
 Back here to London did he slink, 145
 And now works on without a wink
 Of sleep, and we are on the brink
 Of something great in fresco-paint :
 Some garret's ceiling, walls and floor,
 Up and down and o'er and o'er 150
 He splashes, as none splashed before
 Since great Caldara Polidore.
 Or Music means this land of ours
 Some favour yet, to pity won
 By Purcell from his Rosy Bowers,— 155
 "Give me my so-long promised son,

WARING

“ Let Waring end what I begun ! ”
Then down he creeps and out he steals
Only when the night conceals
His face ; in Kent 't is cherry-time, 160
Or hops are picking : or at prime
Of March he wanders as, too happy,
Years ago when he was young,
Some mild eve when woods grew sappy
And the early moths had sprung 165
To life from many a trembling sheath
Woven the warm boughs beneath ;
While small birds said to themselves
What should soon be actual song,
And young gnats, by tens and twelves, 170
Made as if they were the throng
That crowd around and carry aloft
The sound they have nursed, so sweet and pure,
Out of a myriad noises soft,
Into a tone that can endure 175
Amid the noise of a July noon
When all God's creatures crave their boon,
All at once and all in tune,
And get it, happy as Waring then,
Having first within his ken 180
What a man might do with men :
And far too glad, in the even-glow,
To mix with the world he meant to take
Into his hand, he told you, so—
And out of it his world to make, 185
To contract and to expand
As he shut or oped his hand.
Oh Waring, what 's to really be ?
A clear stage and a crowd to see !
Some Garrick, say, out shall not he 190
The heart of Hamlet's mystery pluck ?
Or, where most unclean beasts are rife,

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

Some Junius—am I right?—shall tuck
His sleeve, and forth with flaying-knife !
Some Chatterton shall have the luck 195
Of calling Rowley into life !
Some one shall somehow run a muck
With this old world for want of strife
Sound asleep. Contrive, contrive
To rouse us, Waring ! Who 's alive ? 200
Our men scarce seem in earnest now.
Distinguished names !—but 't is, somehow,
As if they played at being names
Still more distinguished, like the games
Of children. Turn our sport to earnest 205
With a visage of the sternest !
Bring the real times back, confessed
Still better than our very best !

II

I

“WHEN I last saw Waring . . .”
(How all turned to him who spoke !
You saw Waring ? Truth or joke ?
In land-travel or sea-faring ?) 210

II

“We were sailing by Triest
“Where a day or two we harboured :
“A sunset was in the West, 215
“When, looking over the vessel's side,
“One of our company espied
“A sudden speck to larboard.
“And as a sea-duck flies and swims
“At once, so came the light craft up, 220

WARING

“ With its sole lateen sail that trims
“ And turns (the water round its rims
“ Dancing, as round a sinking cup)
“ And by us like a fish it curled,
“ And drew itself up close beside, 225
“ Its great sail on the instant furled,
“ And o’er its thwarts a shrill voice cried,
“ (A neck as bronzed as a Lascar’s)
“ ‘ Buy wine of us, you English Brig?
“ ‘ Or fruit, tobacco and cigars? 230
“ ‘ A pilot for you to Triest?
“ ‘ Without one, look you ne’er so big,
“ ‘ They ’ll never let you up the bay!
“ ‘ We natives should know best.’
“ I turned, and ‘ just those fellows’ way,’ 235
“ Our captain said, ‘ The ’long-shore thieves
“ ‘ Are laughing at us in their sleeves.’

III

“ In truth, the boy leaned laughing back ;
“ And one, half-hidden by his side
“ Under the furled sail, soon I spied, 240
“ With great grass hat and kerchief black,
“ Who looked up with his kingly throat,
“ Said somewhat, while the other shook
“ His hair back from his eyes to look
“ Their longest at us ; then the boat, 245
“ I know not how, turned sharply round,
“ Laying her whole side on the sea
“ As a leaping fish does ; from the lee
“ Into the weather, cut somehow
“ Her sparkling path beneath our bow 250
“ And so went off, as with a bound,
“ Into the rosy and golden half
“ O’ the sky, to overtake the sun
“ And reach the shore, like the sea-calf

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

" Its singing cave ; yet I caught one 255
 " Glance ere away the boat quite passed,
 " And neither time nor toil could mar
 " Those features : so I saw the last
 " Of Waring !"—You? Oh, never star
 Was lost here but it rose afar ! 260
 Look East, where whole new thousands are !
 In Vishnu-land what Avatar ?

THE TWINS

“Give” and “It-shall-be-given-unto-you”

I

GRAND rough old Martin Luther
Bloomed fables—flowers on furze,
The better the uncouth :
Do roses stick like burrs ?

II

A beggar asked an alms
One day at an abbey-door,
Said Luther ; but, seized with qualms,
The abbot replied, “We ’re poor !

III

“Poor, who had plenty once,
“When gifts fell thick as rain :
“But they give us nought, for the nonce,
“And how should we give again ?”

IV

Then the beggar, “See your sins !
“Of old, unless I err,
“Ye had brothers for inmates, twins,
“Date and Dabitur.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

V

“ While Date was in good case
“ Dabitur flourished too :
“ For Dabitur’s lenten face
“ No wonder if Date rue.

VI

“ Would ye retrieve the one ?
“ Try and make plump the other !
“ When Date’s penance is done,
“ Dabitur helps his brother.

VII

“ Only, beware relapse ! ”
The Abbot hung his head.
This beggar might be perhaps
An angel, Luther said.

A LIGHT WOMAN

I

So far as our story approaches the end,
Which do you pity the most of us three?—
My friend, or the mistress of my friend
With her wanton eyes, or me?

II

My friend was already too good to lose,
And seemed in the way of improvement yet,
When she crossed his path with her hunting-noose
And over him drew her net.

III

When I saw him tangled in her toils,
A shame, said I, if she adds just him
To her nine-and-ninety other spoils,
The hundredth for a whim!

IV

And before my friend be wholly hers,
How easy to prove to him, I said,
An eagle's the game her pride prefers,
Though she snaps at a wren instead!

V

So, I gave her eyes my own eyes to take,
My hand sought hers as in earnest need,
And round she turned for my noble sake,
And gave me herself indeed.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

VI

The eagle am I, with my fame in the world,
The wren is he, with his maiden face.
—You look away and your lip is curled?
Patience, a moment's space!

VII

For see, my friend goes shaking and white;
He eyes me as the basilisk:
I have turned, it appears, his day to night,
Eclipsing his sun's disk.

VIII

And I did it, he thinks, as a very thief:
“Though I love her—that, he comprehends—
“One should master one's passion, (love, in chief)
“And be loyal to one's friends!”

IX

And she,—she lies in my hand as tame
As a pear late basking over a wall;
Just a touch to try and off it came;
'T is mine,—can I let it fall?

X

With no mind to eat it, that's the worst!
Were it thrown in the road, would the case assist?
'T was quenching a dozen blue-flies' thirst
When I gave its stalk a twist.

XI

And I,—what I seem to my friend, you see:
What I soon shall seem to his love, you guess:
What I seem to myself, do you ask of me?
No hero, I confess.

A LIGHT WOMAN

XII

'T is an awkward thing to play with souls,
And matter enough to save one's own :
Yet think of my friend, and the burning coals
He played with for bits of stone !

XIII

One likes to show the truth for the truth ;
That the woman was light is very true :
But suppose she says,—Never mind that youth !
What wrong have I done to you ?

XIV

Well, any how, here the story stays,
So far at least as I understand ;
And, Robert Browning, you writer of plays,
Here 's a subject made to your hand !

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

I

I SAID—Then, dearest, since 't is so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,
 Since this was written and needs must be— 5
My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness !
Take back the hope you gave,—I claim
Only a memory of the same,
—And this beside, if you will not blame, 10
 Your leave for one more last ride with me.

II

My mistress bent that brow of hers ;
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,
Fixed me a breathing-while or two 15
 With life or death in the balance : right !
The blood replenished me again ;
My last thought was at least not vain :
I and my mistress, side by side,
Shall be together, breathe and ride, 20
So, one day more am I deified.
 Who knows but the world may end to-night?

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

III

Hush ! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
By many benedictions—sun's 25
And moon's and evening-star's at once—
And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
Down on you, near and yet more near, 30
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here !—
Thus leant she and lingered—joy and fear !
Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

IV

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll 35
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.
What need to strive with a life awry ?
Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss. 40
Might she have loved me ? just as well
She might have hated, who can tell !
Where had I been now if the worst befell ?
And here we are riding, she and I.

V

Fail I alone, in words and deeds ? 45
Why, all men strive and who succeeds ?
We rode ; it seemed my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new,
As the world rushed by on either side.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

I thought,—All labour, yet no less 50
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty done, the undone vast,
This present of theirs with the hopeful past !
I hoped she would love me ; here we ride. 55

VI

What hand and brain went ever paired ?
What heart alike conceived and dared ?
What act proved all its thought had been ?
What will but felt the fleshly screen ?
We ride and I see her bosom heave. 60
There 's many a crown for who can reach.
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each !
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing ! what atones ?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones. 65
My riding is better, by their leave.

VII

What does it all mean, poet ? Well,
Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell
What we felt only ; you expressed
You hold things beautiful the best, 70
And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.
'T is something, nay 't is much : but then,
Have you yourself what 's best for men ?
Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—
Nearer one whit your own sublime 75
Than we who never have turned a rhyme ?
Sing, riding 's a joy ! For me, I ride.

VIII

And you, great sculptor—so, you gave
A score of years to Art, her slave,

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

And that 's your Venus, whence we turn 80
To yonder girl that fords the burn !

You acquiesce, and shall I repine ?
What, man of music, you grown grey
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend, 85
“ Greatly his opera's strains intend,
“ But in music we know how fashions end !
I gave my youth ; but we ride, in fine.

IX

Who knows what 's fit for us ? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate 90
My being—had I signed the bond—
Still one must lead some life beyond,

Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul, 95
Could I descry such ? Try and test !
I sink back shuddering from the quest.
Earth being so good, would heaven seem best ?
Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

X

And yet—she has not spoke so long ! 100
What if heaven be that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturned
Whither life's flower is first discerned,

We, fixed so, ever should so abide ?
What if we still ride on, we two 105
With life for ever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity,—
And heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, for ever ride ? 110

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

A CHILD'S STORY

(WRITTEN FOR, AND INSCRIBED TO, W. M.
THE YOUNGER)

I

HAMELIN Town 's in Brunswick,
By famous Hanover city ;
The river Weser, deep and wide,
Washes its wall on the southern side ;
A pleasanter spot you never spied ;
But, when begins my ditty,
Almost five hundred years ago,
To see the townsfolk suffer so
From vermin, was a pity.

5

II

Rats !
They fought the dogs and killed the cats,
And bit the babies in the cradles,
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles,
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
And even spoiled the women's chats
By drowning their speaking
With shrieking and squeaking
In fifty different sharps and flats.

10

15

20

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

III

At last the people in a body

To the Town Hall came flocking :

“ ’T is clear,” cried they, “ our Mayor ’s a noddy ;

“ And as for our Corporation—shocking

“ To think we buy gowns lined with ermine 25

“ For dolts that can’t or won’t determine

“ What ’s best to rid us of our vermin !

“ You hope, because you ’re old and obese,

“ To find in the furry civic robe ease ?

“ Rouse up, sirs ! Give your brains a racking 30

“ To find the remedy we ’re lacking,

“ Or, sure as fate, we ’ll send you packing ! ”

At this the Mayor and Corporation

Quaked with a mighty consternation.

IV

An hour they sat in council, 35

At length the Mayor broke silence :

“ For a guilder I ’d my ermine gown sell,

“ I wish I were a mile hence !

“ It ’s easy to bid one rack one’s brain—

“ I ’m sure my poor head aches again, 40

“ I ’ve scratched it so, and all in vain.

“ Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap ! ”

Just as he said this, what should hap

At the chamber door but a gentle tap ?

“ Bless us,” cried the Mayor, “ what ’s that ? ” 45

(With the Corporation as he sat,

Looking little though wondrous fat ;

Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister

Than a too-long-opened oyster,

Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous 50

For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

“Only a scraping of shoes on the mat ?
“Anything like the sound of a rat
“Makes my heart go pit-a-pat !”

V

“Come in !”—the Mayor cried, looking bigger : 55
And in did come the strangest figure !
His queer long coat from heel to head
Was half of yellow and half of red,
And he himself was tall and thin,
With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin, 60
And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,
No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,
But lips where smiles went out and in ;
There was no guessing his kith and kin :
And nobody could enough admire 65
The tall man and his quaint attire.
Quoth one : “It ’s as my great-grandsire,
“Starting up at the Trump of Doom’s tone,
“Had walked this way from his painted tomb-
stone !”

VI

He advanced to the council-table : 70
And, “Please your honours,” said he, “I ’m able,
“By means of a secret charm, to draw
“All creatures living beneath the sun,
“That creep or swim or fly or run,
“After me so as you never saw ! 75
“And I chiefly use my charm
“On creatures that do people harm,
“The mole and toad and newt and viper ;
“And people call me the Pied Piper.”
(And here they noticed round his neck 80
A scarf of red and yellow stripe,
To match with his coat of the self-same cheque ;
And at the scarf’s end hung a pipe ;

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

And his fingers, they noticed, were ever stray-
ing

As if impatient to be playing 85

Upon this pipe, as low it dangled

Over his vesture so old-fangled.)

"Yet," said he, "poor piper as I am,

"In Tartary I freed the Cham,

"Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats ; 90

"I eased in Asia the Nizam

"Of a monstrous brood of vampyre-bats :

"And as for what your brain bewilders,

"If I can rid your town of rats

"Will you give me a thousand guilders ?" 95

"One? fifty thousand!"—was the exclamation

Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

VII

Into the street the Piper stept,

Smiling first a little smile,

As if he knew what magic slept 100

In his quiet pipe the while ;

Then, like a musical adept,

To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,

And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled,

Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled ; 105

And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,

You heard as if an army muttered ;

And the muttering grew to a grumbling ;

And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling ;

And out of the houses the rats came tumbling. 110

Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,

Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny rats,

Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,

Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,

Cocking tails and pricking whiskers, 115

Families by tens and dozens,

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—
Followed the Piper for their lives.
From street to street he piped advancing,
And step for step they followed dancing, 120
Until they came to the river Weser,
Wherein all plunged and perished !
—Save one who, stout as Julius Cæsar,
Swam across and lived to carry
(As he, the manuscript he cherished) 125
To Rat-land home his commentary :
Which was, “ At the first shrill notes of the pipe,
“ I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,
“ And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
“ Into a cider-press’s gripe : 130
“ And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,
“ And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,
“ And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,
“ And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks :
“ And it seemed as if a voice 135
“ (Sweeter far than bý harp or bý psaltery
“ Is breathed) called out, ‘ Oh rats, rejoice !
“ ‘ The world is grown to one vast drysaltery !
“ ‘ So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,
“ ‘ Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon !’ 140
“ And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,
“ All ready staved, like a great sun shone
“ Glorious scarce an inch before me,
“ Just as methought it said, ‘ Come, bore me !’
“ —I found the Weser rolling o’er me.” 145

VIII

You should have heard the Hamelin people
Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.
“ Go,” cried the Mayor, “ and get long poles,
“ Poke out the nests and block up the holes !

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

“Consult with carpenters and builders, 150
“And leave in our town not even a trace
“Of the rats!”—when suddenly, up the face
Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
With a, “First, if you please, my thousand
guilders!”

IX

A thousand guilders! The Mayor looked blue; 155
So did the Corporation too.
For council dinners made rare havoc
With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock;
And half the money would replenish
Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish. 160
To pay this sum to a wandering fellow
With a gipsy coat of red and yellow!
“Beside,” quoth the Mayor with a knowing wink,
“Our business was done at the river's brink;
“We saw with our eyes the vermin sink, 165
“And what's dead can't come to life, I think.
“So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink
“From the duty of giving you something for drink,
“And a matter of money to put in your poke;
“But as for the guilders, what we spoke 170
“Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.
“Beside, our losses have made us thrifty.
“A thousand guilders! Come, take fifty!”

X

The Piper's face fell, and he cried
“No trifling! I can't wait, beside! 175
“I've promised to visit by dinnertime
“Bagdat, and accept the prime
“Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,
“For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

“ Of a nest of scorpions no survivor : 180
“ With him I proved no bargain-driver,
“ With you, don't think I 'll bate a stiver !
“ And folks who put me in a passion
“ May find me pipe after another fashion.”

XI

“ How ? ” cried the Mayor, “ d' ye think I brook 185
“ Being worse treated than a Cook ?
“ Insulted by a lazy ribald
“ With idle pipe and vesture piebald ?
“ You threaten us, fellow ? Do your worst,
“ Blow your pipe there till you burst ! ” 190

XII

Once more he stept into the street ;
And to his lips again
Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane ;
And ere he blew three notes (such sweet
Soft notes as yet musician's cunning 195
Never gave the enraptured air)
There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling
Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling,
Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,
Little hands clapping and little tongues chatter-
ing, 200
And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is
scattering,
Out came the children running.
All the little boys and girls,
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls, 205
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after
The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

XIII

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,
Unable to move a step, or cry 210
To the children merrily skipping by,
—Could only follow with the eye
That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.
But how the Mayor was on the rack,
And the wretched Council's bosoms beat, 215
As the Piper turned from the High Street
To where the Weser rolled its waters
Right in the way of their sons and daughters !
However he turned from South to West,
And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed, 220
And after him the children pressed ;
Great was the joy in every breast.
“ He never can cross that mighty top !
“ He 's forced to let the piping drop,
“ And we shall see our children stop ! ” 225
When, lo, as they reached the mountain-side,
A wondrous portal opened wide,
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed ;
And the Piper advanced and the children followed,
And when all were in to the very last, 230
The door in the mountain-side shut fast.
Did I say, all ? No ! One was lame,
And could not dance the whole of the way ;
And in after years, if you would blame
His sadness, he was used to say,— 235
“ It 's dull in our town since my playmates left !
“ I can't forget that I 'm bereft
“ Of all the pleasant sights they see,
“ Which the Piper also promised me.
“ For he led us, he said, to a joyous land, 240
“ Joining the town and just at hand,

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

“ Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew
“ And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
“ And everything was strange and new ;
“ The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here, 245
“ And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
“ And honey-bees had lost their stings,
“ And horses were born with eagles’ wings :
“ And just as I became assured
“ My lame foot would be speedily cured, 250
“ The music stopped and I stood still,
“ And found myself outside the hill,
“ Left alone against my will,
“ To go now limping as before,
“ And never hear of that country more ! ” 255

XIV

Alas, alas for Hamelin !

There came into many a burgher’s pate
A text which says that heaven’s gate
Opes to the rich at as easy rate
As the needle’s eye takes a camel in ! 260
The mayor sent East, West, North and South,
To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,
Wherever it was men’s lot to find him,
Silver and gold to his heart’s content,
If he ’d only return the way he went, 265
And bring the children behind him.
But when they saw ’t was a lost endeavour,
And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,
They made a decree that lawyers never
Should think their records dated duly 270
If, after the day of the month and year,
These words did not as well appear,
“ And so long after what happened here
“ On the Twenty-second of July,

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

“Thirteen hundred and seventy-six” : 275
And the better in memory to fix
The place of the children’s last retreat,
They called it, the Pied Piper’s Street—
Where any one playing on pipe or tabor
Was sure for the future to lose his labour. 280
Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern
To shock with mirth a street so solemn ;
But opposite the place of the cavern
They wrote the story on a column,
And on the great church-window painted 285
The same, to make the world acquainted
How their children were stolen away,
And there it stands to this very day.
And I must not omit to say
That in Transylvania there ’s a tribe 290
Of alien people who ascribe
The outlandish ways and dress
On which their neighbours lay such stress,
To their fathers and mothers having risen
Out of some subterraneous prison 295
Into which they were trepanned
Long time ago in a mighty band
Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
But how or why, they don’t understand.

XV

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers 300
Of scores out with all men—especially pipers !
And, whether they pipe us free fróm rats or fróm
mice,
If we ’ve promised them aught, let us keep our
promise !

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

I

YOU 'RE my friend :

I was the man the Duke spoke to ;

I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke, too ;
So here 's the tale from beginning to end,
My friend !

5

II

Ours is a great wild country :

If you climb to our castle's top,

I don't see where your eye can stop ;

For when you 've passed the cornfield country,

Where vineyards leave off, flocks are packed, 10

And sheep-range leads to cattle-tract,

And cattle-tract to open-chase,

And open-chase to the very base

Of the mountain where, at a funeral pace,

Round about, solemn and slow, 15

One by one, row after row,

Up and up the pine-trees go,

So, like black priests up, and so

Down the other side again

To another greater, wilder country, 20

That 's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,

Branched through and through with many a vein

Whence iron 's dug, and copper 's dealt ;

Look right, look left, look straight before,—

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

Beneath they mine, above they smelt, 25
Copper-ore and iron-ore,
And forge and furnace mould and melt,
And so on, more and ever more,
Till at the last, for a bounding belt,
Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea-shore, 30
—And the whole is our Duke's country.

III

I was born the day this present Duke was—
(And O, says the song, ere I was old !)
In the castle where the other Duke was—
(When I was happy and young, not old !) 35
I in the kennel, he in the bower :
We are of like age to an hour.
My father was huntsman in that day ;
Who has not heard my father say
That, when a boar was brought to bay, 40
Three times, four times out of five,
With his huntspear he 'd contrive
To get the killing-place transfixed,
And pin him true, both eyes betwixt ?
And that 's why the old Duke would rather 45
He lost a salt-pit than my father,
And loved to have him ever in call ;
That 's why my father stood in the hall
When the old Duke brought his infant out
To show the people, and while they passed 50
The wondrous bantling round about,
Was first to start at the outside blast
As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn
Just a month after the babe was born.
“And,” quoth the Kaiser's courier, “since 55
“The Duke has got an heir, our Prince
“Needs the Duke's self at his side” :

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

The Duke looked down and seemed to wince,
But he thought of wars o'er the world wide,
Castles a-fire, men on their march, 60
The toppling tower, the crashing arch ;
And up he looked, and awhile he eyed
The row of crests and shields and banners
Of all achievements after all manners,
And "ay," said the Duke with a surly pride. 65
The more was his comfort when he died
At next year's end, in a velvet suit,
With a gilt glove on his hand, his foot
In a silken shoe for a leather boot,
Petticoated like a herald, 70
In a chamber next to an ante-room,
Where he breathed the breath of page and
groom,
What he called stink, and they, perfume :
—They should have set him on red Berold
Mad with pride, like fire to manage ! 75
They should have got his cheek fresh tannage
Such a day as to-day in the merry sunshine !
Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot merlin !
(Hark, the wind 's on the heath at its game !
Oh for a noble falcon-lanner 80
To flap each broad wing like a banner,
And turn in the wind, and dance like flame !)
Had they broached a white-beer cask from Berlin
—Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine
Put to his lips, when they saw him pine, 85
A cup of our own Moldavia fine,
Cotnar for instance, green as May sorrel
And ropy with sweet,—we shall not quarrel.

IV

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchess
Was left with the infant in her clutches, 90

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

She being the daughter of God knows who :
And now was the time to revisit her tribe.
Abroad and afar they went, the two,
And let our people rail and gibe
At the empty hall and extinguished fire, 95
As loud as we liked, but ever in vain,
Till after long years we had our desire,
And back came the Duke and his mother again.

V

And he came back the pertest little ape
That ever affronted human shape ; 100
Full of his travel, struck at himself.
You 'd say, he despised our bluff old ways ?
—Not he ! For in Paris they told the elf
Our rough North land was the Land of Lays,
The one good thing left in evil days ; 105
Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,
And only in wild nooks like ours
Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,
And see true castles, with proper towers,
Young-hearted women, old-minded men, 110
And manners now as manners were then.
So, all that the old Dukes had been, without
knowing it,
This Duke would fain know he was, without
being it ;
'T was not for the joy's self, but the joy of his
showing it,
Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of our
seeing it, 115
He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,
The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts of them
torn-out :
And chief in the chase his neck he perilled

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

On a lathy horse, all legs and length,
With blood for bone, all speed, no strength ; 120
—They should have set him on red Berold
With the red eye slow consuming in fire,
And the thin stiff ear like an abbey-spire !

VI

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we heard :
And out of a convent, at the word, 125
Came the lady, in time of spring.

—Oh, old thoughts they cling, they cling !
That day, I know, with a dozen oaths
I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes
Fit for the chase of urochs or buffle 130
In winter-time when you need to muffle.

But the Duke had a mind we should cut a figure,

And so we saw the lady arrive :
My friend, I have seen a white crane bigger !

She was the smallest lady alive, 135
Made in a piece of nature's madness,
Too small, almost, for the life and gladness

That over-filled her, as some hive
Out of the bears' reach on the high trees
Is crowded with its safe merry bees : 140
In truth, she was not hard to please !

Up she looked, down she looked, round at the
mead,

Straight at the castle, that 's best indeed
To look at from outside the walls :
As for us, styled the "serfs and thralls," 145

She as much thanked me as if she had said it,
(With her eyes, do you understand?)

Because I patted her horse while I led it ;

And Max, who rode on her other hand,
Said, no bird flew past but she inquired 150
What its true name was, nor ever seemed tired—

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

If that was an eagle she saw hover,
And the green and grey bird on the field was the
plover.

When suddenly appeared the Duke :

And as down she sprung, the small foot pointed 155
On to my hand,—as with a rebuke,

And as if his backbone were not jointed,
The Duke stepped rather aside than forward,
And welcomed her with his grandest smile ;

And, mind you, his mother all the while 160
Chilled in the rear, like a wind to Nor'ward ;

And up, like a weary yawn, with its pullies
Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis ;
And, like a glad sky the north-wind sullies,
The lady's face stopped its play, 165

As if her first hair had grown grey ;
For such things must begin some one day.

VII

In a day or two she was well again ;
As who should say, " You labour in vain !
" This is all a jest against God, who meant 170
" I should ever be, as I am, content
" And glad in his sight ; therefore, glad I will be."
So, smiling as at first went she.

VIII

She was active, stirring, all fire—
Could not rest, could not tire— 175
To a stone she might have given life !
(I myself loved once, in my day)
—For a shepherd's, miner's, huntsman's wife,
(I had a wife, I know what I say)
Never in all the world such an one ! 180
And here was plenty to be done,

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

And she that could do it, great or small,
She was to do nothing at all.
There was already this man in his post,
 This in his station, and that in his office, 185
And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at most,
 To meet his eye, with the other trophies,
Now outside the hall, now in it,
 To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,
At the proper place in the proper minute, 190
 And die away the life between.
And it was amusing enough, each infraction
 Of rule—(but for after-sadness that came)
To hear the consummate self-satisfaction
 With which the young Duke and the old dame 195
Would let her advise, and criticise,
And, being a fool, instruct the wise,
 And, child-like, parcel out praise or blame :
They bore it all in complacent guise,
As though an artificer, after contriving 200
A wheel-work image as if it were living,
Should find with delight it could motion to strike
 him !
So found the Duke, and his mother like him :
The lady hardly got a rebuff—
That had not been contemptuous enough, 205
With his cursed smirk, as he nodded applause,
And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

IX

So, the little lady grew silent and thin,
 Paling and ever paling,
As the way is with a hid chagrin ; 210
 And the Duke perceived that she was ailing,
And said in his heart, "'Tis done to spite me,
"But I shall find in my power to right me !"

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

Don't swear, friend ! The old one, many a year,
Is in hell, and the Duke's self . . . you shall hear. 215

X

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-warning,
When the stag had to break with his foot, of a
 morning,
A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice
That covered the pond till the sun, in a trice,
Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold, 220
 And another and another, and faster and faster,
Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water rolled :
 Then it so chanced that the Duke our master
Asked himself what were the pleasures in season,
 And found, since the calendar bade him be
 heartly, 225
He should do the Middle Age no treason
 In resolving on a hunting-party.
Always provided, old books showed the way of it !
 What meant old poets by their strictures ?
And when old poets had said their say of it, 230
 How taught old painters in their pictures ?
We must revert to the proper channels,
Workings in tapestry, paintings on panels,
And gather up woodcraft's authentic traditions :
Here was food for our various ambitions, 235
As on each case, exactly stated—
 To encourage your dog, now, the properest
 chirrup,
 Or best prayer to Saint Hubert on mounting
 your stirrup—
We of the household took thought and debated.
Blessed was he whose back ached with the jerkin 240
His sire was wont to do forest-work in ;
Blesseder he who nobly sunk "ohs"

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

And "ahs" while he tugged on his grandsire's
trunk-hose ;

What signified hats if they had no rims on,
Each slouching before and behind like the
scallop,

245

And able to serve at sea for a shallop,
Loaded with lacquer and looped with crimson ?
So that the deer now, to make a short rhyme on 't,
What with our Venerers, Prickers and Verderers,
Might hope for real hunters at length and not
murderers,

250

And oh the Duke's tailor, he had a hot time on 't !

XI

Now you must know that when the first dizziness
Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jack-boots sub-
sided,

The Duke put this question, "The Duke's part
provided,
"Had not the Duchess some share in the busi-
ness?"

255

For out of the mouth of two or three witnesses
Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses :

And, after much laying of heads together,
Somebody's cap got a notable feather

By the announcement with proper unction
That he had discovered the lady's function ;

260

Since ancient authors gave this tenet,

"When horns wind a mort and the deer is at
siege,

"Let the dame of the castle prick forth on her
jennet,

"And, with water to wash the hands of her
liege

265

"In a clean ewer with a fair towelling,

"Let her preside at the disembowelling."

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

Now, my friend, if you had so little religion
As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner,
And thrust her broad wings like a banner 270
Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon ;
And if day by day and week by week
You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,
And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,
Would it cause you any great surprise 275
If, when you decided to give her an airing,
You found she needed a little preparing ?
—I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,
If she clung to the perch, as to take it in dudgeon?
Yet when the Duke to his lady signified, 280
Just a day before, as he judged most dignified,
In what a pleasure she was to participate,—
And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,
Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,
As if pressed by fatigue even he could not dissipate, 285
And duly acknowledged the Duke's forethought,
But spoke of her health, if her health were worth
aught,
Of the weight by day and the watch by night,
And much wrong now that used to be right,
So, thanking him, declined the hunting,— 290
Was conduct ever more affronting ?
With all the ceremony settled—
With the towel ready, and the sewer
Polishing up his oldest ewer,
And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald, 295
Black - barred, cream - coated and pink eye-
balled,—
No wonder if the Duke was nettled !
And when she persisted nevertheless,—
Well, I suppose here 's the time to confess
That there ran half round our lady's chamber 300
A balcony none of the hardest to clamber ;

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in waiting,

Stayed in call outside, what need of relating?

And since Jacynth was like a June rose, why, a fervent

Adorer of Jacynth of course was your servant ; 305

And if she had the habit to peep through the casement,

How could I keep at any vast distance?

And so, as I say, on the lady's persistence,

The Duke, dumb-stricken with amazement,

Stood for a while in a sultry smother, 310

And then, with a smile that partook of the awful, Turned her over to his yellow mother

To learn what was held decorous and lawful ;

And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like instinct,

As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its quince-tinct. 315

Oh, but the lady heard the whole truth at once !

What meant she?—Who was she?—Her duty and station,

The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at once,

Its decent regard and its fitting relation—

In brief, my friend, set all the devils in hell free 320

And turn them out to carouse in a belfry

And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,

And then you may guess how that tongue of hers ran on !

Well, somehow or other it ended at last

And, licking her whiskers, out she passed ; 325

And after her,—making (he hoped) a face

Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,

Stalked the Duke's self with the austere grace

Of ancient hero or modern paladin,

From door to staircase—oh such a solemn 330

Unbending of the vertebral column !

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

XII

However, at sunrise our company mustered ;
And here was the huntsman bidding unkennel,
And there 'neath his bonnet the pricker blustered,
With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel ; 335
For the court-yard walls were filled with fog
You might have cut as an axe chops a log—
Like so much wool for colour and bulkiness ;
And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,
Since, before breakfast, a man feels but queasily, 340
And a sinking at the lower abdomen
Begins the day with indifferent omen.
And lo, as he looked around uneasily,
The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it asunder
This way and that from the valley under ; 345
And, looking through the court-yard arch,
Down in the valley, what should meet him
But a troop of Gipsies on their march ?
No doubt with the annual gifts to greet him.

XIII

Now, in your land, Gipsies reach you, only 350
After reaching all lands beside ;
North they go, South they go, trooping or lonely,
And still, as they travel far and wide,
Catch they and keep now a trace here, a trace there,
That puts you in mind of a place here, a place
there. 355
But with us, I believe they rise out of the ground,
And nowhere else, I take it, are found
With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned :
Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on
The very fruit they are meant to feed on. 360
For the earth—not a use to which they don't
turn it,

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

The ore that grows in the mountain's womb,
Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,
They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it—
Whether they weld you, for instance, a snaffle 365
With side-bars never a brute can baffle ;
Or a lock that 's a puzzle of wards within wards ;
Or, if your colt's fore-foot inclines to curve inwards,
Horseshoes they hammer which turn on a swivel
And won't allow the hoof to shrivel. 370
Then they cast bells like the shell of the winkle
That keep a stout heart in the ram with their
tinkle ;
But the sand—they pinch and pound it like otters ;
Commend me to Gipsy glass-makers and potters !
Glasses they 'll blow you, crystal-clear, 375
Where just a faint cloud of rose shall appear,
As if in pure water you dropped and let die
A bruised black-blooded mulberry ;
And that other sort, their crowning pride,
With long white threads distinct inside, 380
Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots which dangle
Loose such a length and never tangle,
Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear waters,
And the cup-lily couches with all the white
daughters :
Such are the works they put their hand to, 385
The uses they turn and twist iron and sand to.
And these made the troop, which our Duke saw
sally
Toward his castle from out of the valley,
Men and women, like new-hatched spiders,
Come out with the morning to greet our riders. 390
And up they wound till they reached the ditch,
Whereat all stopped save one, a witch
That I knew, as she hobbled from the group,
By her gait directly and her stoop,

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

I, whom Jacynth was used to importune 395
 To let that same witch tell us our fortune.
 The oldest Gipsy then above ground ;
 And, sure as the autumn season came round,
 She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,
 And every time, as she swore, for the last time. 400
 And presently she was seen to sidle
 Up to the Duke till she touched his bridle,
 So that the horse of a sudden reared up
 As under its nose the old witch peered up
 With her worn-out eyes, or rather eye-holes 405
 Of no use now but to gather brine,
 And began a kind of level whine
 Such as they used to sing to their viols
 When their ditties they go grinding
 Up and down with nobody minding : 410
 And then, as of old, at the end of the humming
 Her usual presents were forthcoming
 —A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of trebles,
 (Just a sea-shore stone holding a dozen fine
 pebbles,)
 Or a porcelain mouth-piecer to screw on a pipe-end,— 415
 And so she awaited her annual stipend.
 But this time, the Duke would scarcely vouchsafe
 A word in reply ; and in vain she felt
 With twitching fingers at her belt
 For the purse of sleek pine-martin pelt, 420
 Ready to put what he gave in her pouch safe,—
 Till, either to quicken his apprehension,
 Or possibly with an after-intention,
 She was come, she said, to pay her duty
 To the new Duchess, the youthful beauty. 425
 No sooner had she named his lady,
 Than a shine lit up the face so shady,
 And its smirk returned with a novel meaning—
 For it struck him, the babe just wanted weaning ;

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

If one gave her a taste of what life was and sorrow, 430
She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-morrow ;
And who so fit a teacher of trouble

As this sordid crone bent well-nigh double ?

So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture,

(If such it was, for they grow so hirsute 435

That their own fleece serves for natural fur-suit)

He was contrasting, 't was plain from his gesture,

The life of the lady so flower-like and delicate

With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.

I, in brief, was the man the Duke beckoned 440

From out of the throng, and while I drew near

He told the crone—as I since have reckoned

By the way he bent and spoke into her ear

With circumspection and mystery—

The main of the lady's history, 445

Her frowardness and ingratitude :

And for all the crone's submissive attitude

I could see round her mouth the loose plaits

tightening,

And her brow with assenting intelligence brighten-
ing,

As though she engaged with hearty goodwill 450

Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfil,

And promised the lady a thorough frightening.

And so, just giving her a glimpse

Of a purse, with the air of a man who imps

The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the

hernshaw, 455

He bade me take the Gipsy mother

And set her telling some story or other

Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,

To wile away a weary hour

For the lady left alone in her bower, 460

Whose mind and body craved exertion

And yet shrank from all better diversion.

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

XIV

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere curveter,
Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo
Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and servitor, 465
And back I turned and bade the crone follow.
And what makes me confident what 's to be told
you
Had all along been of this crone's devising,
Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold you,
There was a novelty quick as surprising : 470
For first, she had shot up a full head in stature,
And her step kept pace with mine nor faltered,
As if age had foregone its usurpature,
And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,
And the face looked quite of another nature, 475
And the change reached too, whatever the change
meant,
Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement :
For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,
Gold coins were glittering on the edges,
Like the band-roll strung with tomons 480
Which proves the veil a Persian woman's :
And under her brow, like a snail's horns newly
Come out as after the rain he paces,
Two unmistakable eye-points duly
Live and aware looked out of their places. 485
So, we went and found Jacynth at the entry
Of the lady's chamber standing sentry ;
I told the command and produced my companion,
And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,
For since last night, by the same token, 490
Not a single word had the lady spoken :
They went in both to the presence together,
While I in the balcony watched the weather.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

XV

And now, what took place at the very first of all,
I cannot tell, as I never could learn it : 495
Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall
On that little head of hers and burn it
If she knew how she came to drop so soundly
Asleep of a sudden and there continue
The whole time sleeping as profoundly 500
As one of the boars my father would pin you
'Twixt the eyes where life holds garrison,
—Jacynth forgive me the comparison !
But where I begin my own narration
Is a little after I took my station 505
To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,
And, having in those days a falcon eye,
To follow the hunt thro' the open country,
From where the bushes thinlier crested
The hillocks, to a plain where 's not one tree. 510
When, in a moment, my ear was arrested
By—was it singing, or was it saying,
Or a strange musical instrument playing
In the chamber?—and to be certain
I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain, 515
And there lay Jacynth asleep,
Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,
In a rosy sleep along the floor
With her head against the door ;
While in the midst, on the seat of state, 520
Was a queen—the Gipsy woman late,
With head and face downbent
On the lady's head and face intent :
For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease,
The lady sat between her knees, 525
And o'er them the lady's clasped hands met,
And on those hands her chin was set,

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

And her upturned face met the face of the crone
Wherein the eyes had grown and grown
As if she could double and quadruple 530
At pleasure the play of either pupil
—Very like, by her hands' slow fanning,
As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers
They moved to measure, or bell-clappers.
I said "Is it blessing, is it banning, 535
"Do they applaud you or burlesque you—
"Those hands and fingers with no flesh on?"
But, just as I thought to spring in to the rescue,
At once I was stopped by the lady's expression :
For it was life her eyes were drinking 540
From the crone's wide pair above unwinking,
—Life's pure fire received without shrinking,
Into the heart and breast whose heaving
Told you no single drop they were leaving,
—Life, that filling her, passed redundant 545
Into her very hair, back swerving
Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,
As her head thrown back showed the white
throat curving ;
And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,
Moving to the mystic measure, 550
Bounding as the bosom bounded.
I stopped short, more and more confounded,
As still her cheeks burned and eyes glistened,
As she listened and she listened :
When all at once a hand detained me, 555
The selfsame contagion gained me,
And I kept time to the wondrous chime,
Making out words and prose and rhyme,
Till it seemed that the music furl'd
Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped 560
From under the words it first had propped,
And left them midway in the world :

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

Word took word as hand takes hand,
I could hear at last, and understand,
And when I held the unbroken thread, 565
The Gipsy said :—

“ And so at last we find my tribe.
“ And so I set thee in the midst,
“ And to one and all of them describe
“ What thou saidst and what thou didst, 570
“ Our long and terrible journey through,
“ And all thou art ready to say and do
“ In the trials that remain :
“ I trace them the vein and the other vein
“ That meet on thy brow and part again, 575
“ Making our rapid mystic mark ;
“ And I bid my people prove and probe
“ Each eye’s profound and glorious globe
“ Till they detect the kindred spark
“ In those depths so dear and dark, 580
“ Like the spots that snap and burst and flee,
“ Circling over the midnight sea.
“ And on that round young cheek of thine
“ I make them recognize the tinge,
“ As when of the costly scarlet wine 585
“ They drip so much as will impinge
“ And spread in a thinnest scale afloat
“ One thick gold drop from the olive’s coat
“ Over a silver plate whose sheen
“ Still thro’ the mixture shall be seen. 590
“ For so I prove thee, to one and all,
“ Fit, when my people ope their breast,
“ To see the sign, and hear the call,
“ And take the vow, and stand the test
“ Which adds one more child to the rest— 595
“ When the breast is bare and the arms are wide,
“ And the world is left outside.

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

“For there is probation to decree,
“And many and long must the trials be
“Thou shalt victoriously endure, 600
“If that brow is true and those eyes are sure ;
“Like a jewel-finder’s fierce assay
 “Of the prize he dug from its mountain-tomb—
“Let once the vindicating ray
 “Leap out amid the anxious gloom, 605
“And steel and fire have done their part
“And the prize falls on its finder’s heart ;
“So, trial after trial past,
“Wilt thou fall at the very last
“Breathless, half in trance 610
“With the thrill of the great deliverance,
 “Into our arms for evermore ;
“And thou shalt know, those arms once curled
 “About thee, what we knew before,
“How love is the only good in the world. 615
“Henceforth be loved as heart can love,
“Or brain devise, or hand approve !
“Stand up, look below,
“It is our life at thy feet we throw
“To step with into light and joy ; 620
“Not a power of life but we employ
“To satisfy thy nature’s want ;
“Art thou the tree that props the plant,
“Or the climbing plant that seeks the tree—
“Canst thou help us, must we help thee ? 625
“If any two creatures grew into one,
“They would do more than the world has done :
“Though each apart were never so weak,
“Ye vainly through the world should seek
“For the knowledge and the might 630
“Which in such union grew their right :
“So, to approach at least that end,
“And blend,—as much as may be, blend

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

- "Thee with us or us with thee,—
 "As climbing plant or propping tree, 635
 "Shall some one deck thee, over and down,
 "Up and about, with blossoms and leaves?
 "Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland-crown,
 "Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine cleaves,
 "Die on thy boughs and disappear 640
 "While not a leaf of thine is sere?
 "Or is the other fate in store,
 "And art thou fitted to adore,
 "To give thy wondrous self away,
 "And take a stronger nature's sway? 645
 "I foresee and could foretell
 "Thy future portion, sure and well :
 "But those passionate eyes speak true, speak true,
 "Let them say what thou shalt do !
 "Only be sure thy daily life, 650
 "In its peace or in its strife,
 "Never shall be unobserved ;
 "We pursue thy whole career,
 "And hope for it, or doubt, or fear,—
 "Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved, 655
 "We are beside thee in all thy ways,
 "With our blame, with our praise,
 "Our shame to feel, our pride to show,
 "Glad, angry—but indifferent, no !
 "Whether it be thy lot to go, 660
 "For the good of us all, where the haters meet
 "In the crowded city's horrible street ;
 "Or thou step alone through the morass
 "Where never sound yet was
 "Save the dry quick clap of the stork's bill, 665
 "For the air is still, and the water still,
 "When the blue breast of the dipping coot
 "Dives under, and all is mute.
 "So, at the last shall come old age,

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

"Decrepit as befits that stage ; 670
 "How else wouldst thou retire apart
 "With the hoarded memories of thy heart,
 "And gather all to the very least
 "Of the fragments of life's earlier feast,
 "Let fall through eagerness to find 675
 "The crowning dainties yet behind ?
 "Ponder on the entire past
 "Laid together thus at last,
 "When the twilight helps to fuse
 "The first fresh with the faded hues, 680
 "And the outline of the whole,
 "As round eve's shades their framework roll
 "Grandly fronts for once thy soul.
 "And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam
 "Of yet another morning breaks, 685
 "And like the hand which ends a dream,
 "Death, with the might of his sunbeam,
 "Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,
 "Then——"

Ay, then indeed something would happen !
 But what ? For here her voice changed like a
 bird's ; 690
 There grew more of the music and less of the
 words ;
 Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen
 To paper and put you down every syllable
 With those clever clerkly fingers,
 All I've forgotten as well as what lingers 695
 In this old brain of mine that 's but ill able
 To give you even this poor version
 Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with stammering
 —More fault of those who had the hammering
 Of prosody into me and syntax, 700
 And did it, not with hobnails but tintacks !
 But to return from this excursion,—

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

Just, do you mark, when the song was sweetest,
The peace most deep and the charm completest,
There came, shall I say, a snap— 705
And the charm vanished !
And my sense returned, so strangely banished,
And, starting as from a nap,
I knew the crone was bewitching my lady,
With Jacynth asleep ; and but one spring made I 710
Down from the casement, round to the portal,
Another minute and I had entered,—
When the door opened, and more than mortal
Stood, with a face where to my mind centred
All beauties I ever saw or shall see, 715
The Duchess : I stopped as if struck by palsy.
She was so different, happy and beautiful,
I felt at once that all was best,
And that I had nothing to do, for the rest,
But wait her commands, obey and be dutiful. 720
Not that, in fact, there was any commanding ;
I saw the glory of her eye,
And the brow's height and the breast's expanding,
And I was hers to live or to die.
As for finding what she wanted, 725
You know God Almighty granted
Such little signs should serve wild creatures
To tell one another all their desires,
So that each knows what his friend requires,
And does its bidding without teachers. 730
I preceded her ; the crone
Followed silent and alone ;
I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered
In the old style ; both her eyes had slunk
Back to their pits ; her stature shrunk ; 735
In short, the soul in its body sunk
Like a blade sent home to its scabbard.
We descended, I preceding ;

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

Crossed the court with nobody heeding ;
All the world was at the chase, 740
The courtyard like a desert-place,
The stable emptied of its small fry ;
I saddled myself the very palfrey
I remember patting while it carried her,
The day she arrived and the Duke married her. 745
And, do you know, though it 's easy deceiving
Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing
The lady had not forgotten it either,
And knew the poor devil so much beneath her
Would have been only too glad for her service 750
To dance on hot ploughshares like a Turk dervise,
But, unable to pay proper duty where owing it,
Was reduced to that pitiful method of showing it :
For though the moment I began setting
His saddle on my own nag of Berold's begetting, 755
(Not that I meant to be obtrusive)
She stopped me, while his rug was shifting,
By a single rapid finger's lifting,
And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,
And a little shake of the head, refused me,— 760
I say, although she never used me,
Yet when she was mounted, the Gipsy behind her,
And I ventured to remind her,
I suppose with a voice of less steadiness
Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me, 765
—Something to the effect that I was in readiness
Whenever God should please she needed me,—
Then, do you know, her face looked down on me
With a look that placed a crown on me,
And she felt in her bosom,—mark, her bosom— 770
And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,
Dropped me . . . ah, had it been a purse
Of silver, my friend, or gold that 's worse,
Why, you see, as soon as I found myself

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

So understood,—that a true heart so may gain 775
 Such a reward,—I should have gone home again,
 Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned myself!
 It was a little plait of hair
 Such as friends in a convent make
 To wear, each for the other's sake,— 780
 This, see, which at my breast I wear,
 Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudging),
 And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.
 And then,—and then,—to cut short,—this is idle,
 These are feelings it is not good to foster,— 785
 I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle,
 And the palfrey bounded,—and so we lost her.

XVI

When the liquor 's out why clink the cannikin?
 I did think to describe you the panic in
 The redoubtable breast of our master the manni-
 kin, 790
 And what was the pitch of his mother's yellowness,
 How she turned as a shark to snap the spare-rib
 Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving Carib,
 When she heard, what she called the flight of the
 feloness
 —But it seems such child's play, 795
 What they said and did with the lady away!
 And to dance on, when we 've lost the music,
 Always made me—and no doubt makes you—sick.
 Nay, to my mind, the world's face looked so stern
 As that sweet form disappeared through the
 postern, 800
 She that kept it in constant good humour,
 It ought to have stopped; there seemed nothing
 to do more.
 But the world thought otherwise and went on,
 And my head 's one that its spite was spent on:

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

Thirty years are fled since that morning, 805
And with them all my head's adorning.
Nor did the old Duchess die outright,
As you expect, of suppressed spite,
The natural end of every adder
Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder : 810
But she and her son agreed, I take it,
That no one should touch on the story to wake it,
For the wound in the Duke's pride rankled fiery,
So, they made no search and small inquiry—
And when fresh Gipsies have paid us a visit, I 've 815
Noticed the couple were never inquisitive,
But told them they 're folks the Duke don't want
here,
And bade them make haste and cross the frontier.
Brief, the Duchess was gone and the Duke was
glad of it,
And the old one was in the young one's stead, 820
And took, in her place, the household's head,
And a blessed time the household had of it !
And were I not, as a man may say, cautious
How I trench, more than needs, on the nauseous,
I could favour you with sundry touches 825
Of the paint-smutches with which the Duchess
Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's yellow-
ness
(To get on faster) until at last her
Cheek grew to be one master-plaster
Of mucus and fucus from mere use of ceruse : 830
In short, she grew from scalp to udder
Just the object to make you shudder.

XVII

You 're my friend—
What a thing friendship is, world without end !
How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up 835

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

As if somebody broached you a glorious runlet,
And poured out, all lovelily, sparkingly, sunlit,
Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,
Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids—
Friendship may match with that monarch of fluids ; 840
Each supples a dry brain, fills you its ins-and-outs,
Gives your life's hour-glass a shake when the thin
sand doubts

Whether to run on or stop short, and guarantees
Age is not all made of stark sloth and arrant ease.
I have seen my little lady once more, 845
Jacynth, the Gipsy, Berold, and the rest of it,
For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you before ;
I always wanted to make a clean breast of it :
And now it is made—why, my heart's blood, that
went trickle,

Trickle, but anon, in such muddy driblets, 850
Is pumped up brisk now, through the main ventricle,
And genially floats me about the giblets.

I 'll tell you what I intend to do :
I must see this fellow his sad life through—
He is our Duke, after all, 855
And I, as he says, but a serf and thrall.

My father was born here, and I inherit
His fame, a chain he bound his son with ;
Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it,
But there 's no mine to blow up and get done
with : 860

So, I must stay till the end of the chapter.
For, as to our middle-age-manners-adapter,
Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on,
Some day or other, his head in a morion
And breast in a hauberk, his heels he 'll kick up, 865
Slain by an onslaught fierce of hiccup.
And then, when red doth the sword of our Duke
rust,

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

And its leathern sheath lie o'ergrown with a blue
crust,

Then I shall scrape together my earnings ;

For, you see, in the churchyard Jacynth reposes, 870

And our children all went the way of the roses :

It's a long lane that knows no turnings.

One needs but little tackle to travel in ;

So, just one stout cloak shall I indue :

And for a staff, what beats the javelin 875

With which his boars my father pinned you ?

And then, for a purpose you shall hear presently,

Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump skinful,

I shall go journeying, who but I, pleasantly !

Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful. 880

What's a man's age ? He must hurry more, that's
all ;

Cram in a day, what his youth took a year to hold :

When we mind labour, then only, we're too old—

What age had Methusalem when he begat Saul ?

And at last, as its haven some buffeted ship sees, 885

(Come all the way from the north-parts with
sperm oil)

I hope to get safely out of the turmoil

And arrive one day at the land of the Gipsies,

And find my lady, or hear the last news of her

From some old thief and son of Lucifer, 890

His forehead chapleted green with wreathy hop,

Sunburned all over like an Æthiop.

And when my Cotnar begins to operate

And the tongue of the rogue to run at a proper rate,

And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each flaccid
dent, 895

I shall drop in with—as if by accident—

“ You never knew, then, how it all ended,

“ What fortune good or bad attended

“ The little lady your Queen befriended ? ”

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

—And when that 's told me, what 's remaining? 900
This world 's too hard for my explaining.
The same wise judge of matters equine
Who still preferred some slim four-year-old
To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold,
And, for strong Cotnar, drank French weak wine, 905
He also must be such a lady's scorner!
Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau:
Now up, now down, the world 's one see-saw.
—So, I shall find out some snug corner
Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-knight, 910
Turn myself round and bid the world good night;
And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet's blowing
Wakes me (unless priests cheat us laymen)
To a world where will be no further throwing
Pearls before swine that can't value them. Amen! 915

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL

SHORTLY AFTER THE REVIVAL OF LEARNING
IN EUROPE

LET us begin and carry up this corpse,
Singing together.
Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes
Each in its tether
Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain, 5
Cared-for till cock-crow :
Look out if yonder be not day again
Rimming the rock-row !
That 's the appropriate country ; there, man's
thought,
Rarer, intenser, 10
Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,
Chafes in the censer.
Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop ;
Seek we sepulture
On a tall mountain, citied to the top, 15
Crowded with culture !
All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels ;
Clouds overcome it ;
No ! yonder sparkle is the citadel's
Circling its summit. 20
Thither our path lies ; wind we up the heights :
Wait ye the warning ?
Our low life was the level's and the night's ;
He 's for the morning.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

Step to a tune, square chests, erect each head, 25
 'Ware the beholders !

This is our master, famous calm and dead,
 Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd ! sleep, darkling thorpe and
 croft,

 Safe from the weather ! 30

He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,

 Singing together,

He was a man born with thy face and throat,

 Lyric Apollo !

Long he lived nameless : how should spring take
 note 35

 Winter would follow ?

Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone !

 Cramped and diminished,

Moaned he, "New measures, other feet anon !

 " My dance is finished ? " 40

No, that 's the world's way : (keep the mountain-
 side,

 Make for the city !)

He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride

 Over men's pity ;

Left play for work, and grappled with the world 45

 Bent on escaping :

" What 's in the scroll," quoth he, " thou keepest
 furled ?

 " Show me their shaping,

" Theirs who most studied man, the bard and
 sage,—

 " Give ! "—So, he gowned him, 50

Straight got by heart that book to its last page :

 Learned, we found him.

Yea, but we found him bald too, eyes like lead,

 Accents uncertain :

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL

"Time to taste life," another would have said, 55
 "Up with the curtain!"
 This man said rather, "Actual life comes next?"
 "Patience a moment!"
 "Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,
 "Still there 's the comment. 60
 "Let me know all! Prate not of most or least,
 "Painful or easy!"
 "Even to the crumbs I 'd fain eat up the feast,
 "Ay, nor feel queasy."
 Oh, such a life as he resolved to live, 65
 When he had learned it,
 When he had gathered all books had to give!
 Sooner, he spurned it.
 Image the whole, then execute the parts—
 Fancy the fabric 70
 Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,
 Ere mortar dab brick!

(Here 's the town-gate reached: there 's the
 market-place

 Gaping before us.)
 Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace 75
 (Hearten our chorus!)
 That before living he 'd learn how to live—
 No end to learning:
 Earn the means first—God surely will contrive
 Use for our earning. 80
 Others mistrust and say, "But time escapes:
 "Live now or never!"
 He said, "What 's time? Leave Now for dogs
 and apes!"
 "Man has Forever."
 Back to his book then: deeper drooped his head: 85
 Calculus racked him:

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead :

Tussis attacked him.

“Now, master, take a little rest !”—not he !

(Caution redoubled,

90

Step two abreast, the way winds narrowly !)

Not a whit troubled

Back to his studies, fresher than at first,

Fierce as a dragon

He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)

95

Sucked at the flagon.

Oh, if we draw a circle premature,

Heedless of far gain,

Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure

Bad is our bargain !

100

Was it not great ? did not he throw on God,

(He loves the burthen)—

God's task to make the heavenly period

Perfect the earthen ?

Did not he magnify the mind, show clear

105

Just what it all meant ?

He would not discount life, as fools do here,

Paid by instalment.

He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's suc-
cess

Found, or earth's failure :

110

“Wilt thou trust death or not ?” He answered

“Yes :

“Hence with life's pale lure !”

That low man seeks a little thing to do,

Sees it and does it :

This high man, with a great thing to pursue,

115

Dies ere he knows it.

That low man goes on adding one to one,

His hundred's soon hit :

This high man, aiming at a million,

Misses an unit.

120

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL

That, has the world here—should he need the next,
Let the world mind him !

This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed
Seeking shall find him.

So, with the throttling hands of death at strife, 125
Ground he at grammar ;

Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife :
While he could stammer

He settled *Hoti's* business—let it be !—
Properly based *Oun*—

Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*, 130
Dead from the waist down.

Well, here 's the platform, here 's the proper place :
Hail to your purlieus,

All ye highfliers of the feathered race, 135
Swallows and curlews !

Here 's the top-peak ; the multitude below
Live, for they can, there :

This man decided not to Live but Know—
Bury this man there ?

Here—here 's his place, where meteors shoot, 140
clouds form,

Lightnings are loosened,
Stars come and go ! Let joy break with the storm,
Peace let the dew send !

Lofty designs must close in like effects : 145
Loftily lying,

Leave him—still loftier than the world suspects,
Living and dying.

THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY

A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE

ROSA MUNDI ; SEU, FULCITE ME FLORIBUS. A CONCEIT OF MASTER GYSBRECHT, CANON-REGULAR OF SAINT JODOCUS-BY-THE-BAR, YPRES CITY. CANTUQUE, *VIRGILIUS*. AND HATH OFTEN BEEN SUNG AT HOCK-TIDE AND FESTIVALS. GAVISUS ERAM, *JESSIDES*.

(It would seem to be a glimpse from the burning of Jacques du Bourg-Molay, at Paris, A.D. 1314 ; as distorted by the refraction from Flemish brain to brain, during the course of a couple of centuries.)

I

PREADMONISHETH THE ABBOT DEODAET

THE Lord, we look to once for all,
Is the Lord we should look at, all at once :
He knows not to vary, saith Saint Paul,
Nor the shadow of turning, for the nonce.
See him no other than as he is !
Give both the infinitudes their due—
Infinite mercy, but, I wis,
As infinite a justice too.

[*Organ : plagal-cadence.*

As infinite a justice too.

II

ONE SINGETH

John, Master of the Temple of God,
Falling to sin the Unknown Sin,
What he bought of Emperor Aldabrod,
He sold it to Sultan Saladin :

THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY

Till, caught by Pope Clement, a-buzzing there,
Hornet-prince of the mad wasps' hive,
And clipt of his wings in Paris square,
They bring him now to be burned alive.

[*And wanteth there grace of lute or clavicithern,
ye shall say to confirm him who singeth—*
We bring John now to be burned alive.

III

In the midst is a goodly gallows built ;
'Twixt fork and fork, a stake is stuck ;
But first they set divers tumbrils a-tilt,
Make a trench all round with the city muck ;
Inside they pile log upon log, good store ;
Faggots no few, blocks great and small,
Reach a man's mid-thigh, no less, no more,—
For they mean he should roast in the sight of all.

CHORUS

We mean he should roast in the sight of all.

IV

Good sappy bavins that kindle forthwith ;
Billets that blaze substantial and slow ;
Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith ;
Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white glow :
Then up they hoist me John in a chafe,
Sling him fast like a hog to scorch,
Spit in his face, then leap back safe,
Sing "Laudes" and bid clap-to the torch.

CHORUS

Laus Deo—who bids clap-to the torch.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

V

John of the Temple, whose fame so bragged,
Is burning alive in Paris square !
How can he curse, if his mouth is gagged ?
Or wriggle his neck, with a collar there ?
Or heave his chest, which a band goes round ?
Or threat with his fist, since his arms are spliced ?
Or kick with his feet, now his legs are bound ?
—Thinks John, I will call upon Jesus Christ.
[*Here one crosses himself.*]

VI

Jesus Christ—John had bought and sold,
Jesus Christ—John had eaten and drunk ;
To him, the Flesh meant silver and gold.
(*Salvâ reverentiâ.*)
Now it was, “Saviour, bountiful lamb,
“I have roasted thee Turks, though men roast
me !
“See thy servant, the plight wherein I am !
“Art thou a saviour? Save thou me !”

CHORUS

’T is John the mocker cries, “Save thou me !”

VII

Who maketh God’s menace an idle word ?
—Saith, it no more means what it proclaims,
Than a damsel’s threat to her wanton bird ?—
For she too prattles of ugly names.
—Saith, he knoweth but one thing,—what he
knows ?
That God is good and the rest is breath ;

THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY

Why else is the same styled Sharon's rose?
Once a rose, ever a rose, he saith.

CHORUS

O, John shall yet find a rose, he saith !

VIII

Alack, there be roses and roses, John !
Some, honied of taste like your leman's tongue :
Some, bitter ; for why ? (roast gaily on !)
Their tree struck root in devil's-dung.
When Paul once reasoned of righteousness
And of temperance and of judgment to come,
Good Felix trembled, he could no less :
John, snickering, crook'd his wicked thumb.

CHORUS

What cometh to John of the wicked thumb ?

IX

Ha ha, John plucketh now at his rose
To rid himself of a sorrow at heart !
Lo,—petal on petal, fierce rays uncloset ;
Anther on anther, sharp spikes outstart ;
And with blood for dew, the bosom boils ;
And a gust of sulphur is all its smell ;
And lo, he is horribly in the toils
Of a coal-black giant flower of hell !

CHORUS

What maketh heaven, That maketh hell.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

X

So, as John called now, through the fire amain,
On the Name, he had cursed with, all his life—
To the Person, he bought and sold again—
For the Face, with his daily buffets rife—
Feature by feature It took its place :
And his voice, like a mad dog's choking bark,
At the steady whole of the Judge's face—
Died. Forth John's soul flared into the dark.

SUBJOINETH THE ABBOT DEODAET

God help all poor souls lost in the dark !

HOLY-CROSS DAY

ON WHICH THE JEWS WERE FORCED TO ATTEND AN ANNUAL CHRISTIAN SERMON IN ROME

[“ Now was come about Holy-Cross Day, and now must my lord preach his first sermon to the Jews : as it was of old cared for in the merciful bowels of the Church, that, so to speak, a crumb at least from her conspicuous table here in Rome should be, though but once yearly, cast to the famishing dogs, under-trampled and bespitten-upon beneath the feet of the guests. And a moving sight in truth, this, of so many of the besotted blind resuf and ready-to-perish Hebrews ! now maternally brought—nay (for He saith, ‘ Compel them to come in ’) haled, as it were, by the head and hair, and against their obstinate hearts, to partake of the heavenly grace. What awakening, what striving with tears, what working of a yeasty conscience ! Nor was my lord wanting to himself on so apt an occasion ; witness the abundance of conversions which did incontinently reward him though not to my lord be altogether the glory.”—*Diary by the Bishop's Secretary, 1600.*]

What the Jews really said, on thus being driven to church, was rather to this effect :—

I

FEE, faw, fum ! bubble and squeak !
Blessedest Thursday 's the fat of the week.
Rumble and tumble, sleek and rough,
Stinking and savoury, smug and gruff,
Take the church-road, for the bell's due chime 5
Gives us the summons—'t is sermon-time !

II

Boh, here 's Barnabas ! Job, that 's you ?
Up stumps Solomon—bustling too ?
Shame, man ! greedy beyond your years
To handsel the bishop's shaving-shears ? 10
Fair play 's a jewel ! Leave friends in the lurch ?
Stand on a line ere you start for the church !

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

III

Higgledy piggledy, packed we lie,
Rats in a hamper, swine in a sty,
Wasps in a bottle, frogs in a sieve, 15
Worms in a carcase, fleas in a sleeve.
Hist ! square shoulders, settle your thumbs
And buzz for the bishop—here he comes.

IV

Bow, wow, wow—a bone for the dog !
I liken his Grace to an acorned hog. 20
What, a boy at his side, with the bloom of a lass,
To help and handle my lord's hour-glass !
Didst ever behold so lithe a chine ?
His cheek hath laps like a fresh-singed swine.

V

Aaron 's asleep—shove hip to haunch, 25
Or somebody deal him a dig in the paunch !
Look at the purse with the tassel and knob,
And the gown with the angel and thingumbob !
What 's he at, quotha ? reading his text !
Now you 've his curtsey—and what comes next ? 30

VI

See to our converts—you doomed black dozen—
No stealing away—nor cog nor cozen !
You five, that were thieves, deserve it fairly ;
You seven, that were beggars, will live less
sparely ;
You took your turn and dipped in the hat, 35
Got fortune—and fortune gets you ; mind that !

HOLY-CROSS DAY

VII

Give your first groan—compunction 's at work ;
And soft ! from a Jew you mount to a Turk.
Lo, Micah,—the selfsame beard on chin
He was four times already converted in ! 40
Here 's a knife, clip quick—it 's a sign of grace—
Or he ruins us all with his hanging-face.

VIII

Whom now is the bishop a-leering at ?
I know a point where his text falls pat.
I 'll tell him to-morrow, a word just now 45
Went to my heart and made me vow
I meddle no more with the worst of trades—
Let somebody else pay his serenades.

IX

Groan all together now, whee—hee—hee !
It 's a-work, it 's a-work, ah, woe is me ! 50
It began, when a herd of us, picked and placed,
Were spurred through the Corso, stripped to the
waist ;
Jew brutes, with sweat and blood well spent
To usher in worthily Christian Lent.

X

It grew, when the hangman entered our bounds, 55
Yelled, pricked us out to his church like hounds :
It got to a pitch, when the hand indeed
Which gutted my purse would throttle my creed :
And it overflows when, to even the odd,
Men I helped to their sins help me to their God. 60

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

XI

But now, while the scapegoats leave our flock,
And the rest sit silent and count the clock,
Since forced to muse the appointed time
On these precious facts and truths sublime,—
Let us fitly employ it, under our breath, 65
In saying Ben Ezra's Song of Death.

XII

For Rabbi Ben Ezra, the night he died,
Called sons and sons' sons to his side,
And spoke, "This world has been harsh and
strange ;
"Something is wrong : there needeth a change. 70
"But what, or where? at the last or first?
"In one point only we sinned, at worst.

XIII

"The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,
"And again in his border see Israel set.
"When Judah beholds Jerusalem, 75
"The stranger-seed shall be joined to them :
"To Jacob's House shall the Gentiles cleave.
"So the Prophet saith and his sons believe.

XIV

"Ay, the children of the chosen race
"Shall carry and bring them to their place : 80
"In the land of the Lord shall lead the same,
"Bondsmen and handmaids. Who shall blame,
"When the slaves enslave, the oppressed ones o'er
"The oppressor triumph for evermore?

HOLY-CROSS DAY

XV

“ God spoke, and gave us the word to keep, 85
“ Bade never fold the hands nor sleep
“ ’Mid a faithless world,—at watch and ward,
“ Till Christ at the end relieve our guard.
“ By His servant Moses the watch was set :
“ Though near upon cock-crow, we keep it yet. 90

XVI

“ Thou ! if thou wast He, who at mid-watch came,
“ By the starlight, naming a dubious name !
“ And if, too heavy with sleep—too rash
“ With fear—O Thou, if that martyr-gash
“ Fell on Thee coming to take thine own, 95
“ And we gave the Cross, when we owed the
Throne—

XVII

“ Thou art the Judge. We are bruised thus.
“ But, the Judgment over, join sides with us !
“ Thine too is the cause ! and not more thine
“ Than ours, is the work of these dogs and swine, 100
“ Whose life laughs through and spits at their
creed !
“ Who maintain Thee in word, and defy Thee in
deed !

XVIII

“ We withstood Christ then ? Be mindful how
“ At least we withstand Barabbas now !
“ Was our outrage sore ? But the worst we spared, 105
“ To have called these—Christians, had we dared !
“ Let defiance to them pay mistrust of Thee,
“ And Rome make amends for Calvary !

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

XIX

“ By the torture, prolonged from age to age,
“ By the infamy, Israel’s heritage, 110
“ By the Ghetto’s plague, by the garb’s disgrace,
“ By the badge of shame, by the felon’s place,
“ By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,
“ And the summons to Christian fellowship,—

XX

“ We boast our proof that at least the Jew 115
“ Would wrest Christ’s name from the Devil’s
crew.
“ Thy face took never so deep a shade
“ But we fought them in it, God our aid !
“ A trophy to bear, as we march, thy band,
“ South, East, and on to the Pleasant Land !” 120

[*Pope Gregory XVI. abolished this bad business
of the Sermon.—R. B.*]

PROTUS

AMONG these latter busts we count by scores,
Half-emperors and quarter-emperors,
Each with his bay-leaf fillet, loose-thonged vest,
Loric and low-browed Gorgon on the breast,—
One loves a baby face, with violets there,
Violets instead of laurel in the hair,
As those were all the little locks could bear.

Now read here. “Protus ends a period
“Of empery beginning with a god ;
“Born in the porphyry chamber at Byzant,
“Queens by his cradle, proud and ministrant :
“And if he quickened breath there, 't would like
fire
“Pantingly through the dim vast realm transpire.
“A fame that he was missing spread afar :
“The world from its four corners, rose in war,
“Till he was borne out on a balcony
“To pacify the world when it should see.
“The captains ranged before him, one, his hand
“Made baby points at, gained the chief command.
“And day by day more beautiful he grew
“In shape, all said, in feature and in hue,
“While young Greek sculptors, gazing on the
child,
“Became with old Greek sculpture reconciled.
“Already sages laboured to condense
“In easy tomes a life's experience :
“And artists took grave counsel to impart
“In one breath and one hand-sweep, all their art—

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

“To make his graces prompt as blossoming
“Of plentifully-watered palms in spring :
“Since well beseems it, whoso mounts the throne,
“For beauty, knowledge, strength, should stand
 alone,
“And mortals love the letters of his name.”

—Stop ! Have you turned two pages ? Still the same.

New reign, same date. The scribe goes on to say
How that same year, on such a month and day,

“John the Pannonian, groundedly believed
“A blacksmith’s bastard, whose hard hand re-
 prievied

“The Empire from its fate the year before,—

“Came, had a mind to take the crown, and wore

“The same for six years (during which the Huns

“Kept off their fingers from us), till his sons

“Put something in his liquor”—and so forth.

Then a new reign. Stay—“Take at its just worth”
(Subjoins an annotator) “what I give

“As hearsay. Some think, John let Protus live

“And slip away. ’T is said, he reached man’s age

“At some blind northern court; made, first a page,

“Then tutor to the children; last, of use

“About the hunting-stables. I deduce

“He wrote the little tract ‘On worming dogs,’

“Whereof the name in sundry catalogues

“Is extant yet. A Protus of the race

“Is rumoured to have died a monk in Thrace,—

“And if the same, he reached senility.”

Here ’s John the Smith’s rough-hammered head.

Great eye,

Gross jaw and griped lips do what granite can

To give you the crown-grasper. What a man !

THE STATUE AND THE BUST

THERE 's a palace in Florence, the world knows
well,

And a statue watches it from the square,
And this story of both do our townsmen tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,
At the farthest window facing the East
Asked, "Who rides by with the royal air?" 5

The bridesmaids' prattle around her ceased;
She leaned forth, one on either hand;
They saw how the blush of the bride increased—

They felt by its beats her heart expand— 10
As one at each ear and both in a breath
Whispered, "The Great-Duke Ferdinand."

That self-same instant, underneath,
The Duke rode past in his idle way,
Empty and fine like a swordless sheath. 15

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,
Till he threw his head back—"Who is she?"
—"A bride the Riccardi brings home to-day."

Hair in heaps lay heavily
Over a pale brow spirit-pure— 20
Carved like the heart of the coal-black tree,

Crisped like a war-steed's encolure—
And vainly sought to dissemble her eyes
Of the blackest black our eyes endure.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise 25
Filled the fine empty sheath of a man,—
The Duke grew straightway brave and wise.

He looked at her, as a lover can ;
She looked at him, as one who awakes :
The past was a sleep, and her life began. 30

Now, love so ordered for both their sakes,
A feast was held that selfsame night
In the pile which the mighty shadow makes.

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,
But the palace overshadows one, 35
Because of a crime which may God requite !

To Florence and God the wrong was done,
Through the first republic's murder there
By Cosimo and his cursed son.)

The Duke (with the statue's face in the square) 40
Turned in the midst of his multitude
At the bright approach of the bridal pair.

Face to face the lovers stood
A single minute and no more,
While the bridegroom bent as a man subdued— 45

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor—
For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred,
As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word ?
If a word did pass, which I do not think, 50
Only one out of the thousand heard.

THE STATUE AND THE BUST

That was the bridegroom. At day's brink
He and his bride were alone at last
In a bedchamber by a taper's blink.

Calmly he said that her lot was cast, 55
That the door she had passed was shut on her
Till the final catafalk repassed.

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir,
Through a certain window facing the East,
She could watch like a convent's chronicler. 60

Since passing the door might lead to a feast,
And a feast might lead to so much beside,
He, of many evils, chose the least.

"Freely I choose too," said the bride—
"Your window and its world suffice," 65
Replied the tongue, while the heart replied—

"If I spend the night with that devil twice,
"May his window serve as my loop of hell
"Whence a damned soul looks on paradise !

"I fly to the Duke who loves me well, 70
"Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow
"Ere I count another ave-bell.

"'T is only the coat of a page to borrow,
"And tie my hair in a horse-boy's trim,
"And I save my soul—but not to-morrow"— 75

(She checked herself and her eye grew dim)
"My father tarries to bless my state :
"I must keep it one day more for him.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

“Is one day more so long to wait?
“Moreover the Duke rides past, I know ;
“We shall see each other, sure as fate.” 80

She turned on her side and slept. Just so !
So we resolve on a thing and sleep :
So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, “Dear or cheap
“As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove
“To body or soul, I will drain it deep.” 85

And on the morrow, bold with love,
He beckoned the bridegroom (close on call,
As his duty bade, by the Duke’s alcove) 90

And smiled “’T was a very funeral,
“Your lady will think, this feast of ours,—
“A shame to efface, whate’er befall !

“What if we break from the Arno bowers,
“And try if Petraja, cool and green,
“Cure last night’s fault with this morning’s
 flowers ?” 95

The bridegroom, not a thought to be seen
On his steady brow and quiet mouth,
Said, “Too much favour for me so mean !

“But, alas ! my lady leaves the South ;
“Each wind that comes from the Apennine
“Is a menace to her tender youth : 100

“Nor a way exists, the wise opine,
“If she quits her palace twice this year,
“To avert the flower of life’s decline.” 105

THE STATUE AND THE BUST

Quoth the Duke, "A sage and a kindly fear.
"Moreover Petraja is cold this spring :
"Be our feast to-night as usual here !"

And then to himself—"Which night shall bring
"Thy bride to her lover's embraces, fool—
"Or I am the fool, and thou art the king ! 110

"Yet my passion must wait a night, nor cool—
"For to-night the Envoy arrives from France
"Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my tool.

"I need thee still and might miss perchance. 115
"To-day is not wholly lost, beside,
"With its hope of my lady's countenance :

"For I ride—what should I do but ride ?
"And passing her palace, if I list,
"May glance at its window—well betide !" 120

So said, so done : nor the lady missed
One ray that broke from the ardent brow,
Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit kissed.

Be sure that each renewed the vow,
No morrow's sun should arise and set 125
And leave them then as it left them now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,
With still fresh cause to wait one day more
Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love's brief morning wore, 130
With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,
They found love not as it seemed before.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

They thought it would work infallibly,
But not in despite of heaven and earth :
The rose would blow when the storm passed by. 135

Meantime they could profit in winter's dearth
By store of fruits that supplant the rose :
The world and its ways have a certain worth :

And to press a point while these oppose
Were simple policy ; better wait : 140
We lose no friends and we gain no foes.

Meantime, worse fates than a lover's fate,
Who daily may ride and pass and look
Where his lady watches behind the grate !

And she—she watched the square like a book 145
Holding one picture and only one,
Which daily to find she undertook :

When the picture was reached the book was done,
And she turned from the picture at night to scheme
Of tearing it out for herself next sun. 150

So weeks grew months, years ; gleam by gleam
The glory dropped from their youth and love,
And both perceived they had dreamed a dream ;

Which hovered as dreams do, still above :
But who can take a dream for a truth ? 155
Oh, hide our eyes from the next remove !

One day as the lady saw her youth
Depart, and the silver thread that streaked
Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's tooth,

THE STATUE AND THE BUST

The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked,— 160
And wondered who the woman was,
Hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked,

Fronting her silent in the glass—
“Summon here,” she suddenly said,
“Before the rest of my old self pass, 165

“Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,
“Who fashions the clay no love will change,
“And fixes a beauty never to fade.

“Let Robbia’s craft so apt and strange
“Arrest the remains of young and fair, 170
“And rivet them while the seasons range.

“Make me a face on the window there,
“Waiting as ever, mute the while,
“My love to pass below in the square !

“And let me think that it may beguile 175
“Dreary days which the dead must spend
“Down in their darkness under the aisle,

“To say, ‘What matters it at the end ?
“‘I did no more while my heart was warm
“‘Than does that image, my pale-faced friend.’ 180

“Where is the use of the lip’s red charm,
“The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow,
“And the blood that blues the inside arm—

“Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,
“The earthly gift to an end divine ? 185
“A lady of clay is as good, I trow.”

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

But long ere Robbia's cornice, fine,
With flowers and fruits which leaves enlace,
Was set where now is the empty shrine—

(And, leaning out of a bright blue space, 190
As a ghost might lean from a chink of sky,
The passionate pale lady's face—

Eyeing ever, with earnest eye
And quick-turned neck at its breathless stretch,
Some one who ever is passing by—) 195

The Duke had sighed like the simplest wretch
In Florence, "Youth—my dream escapes !
"Will its record stay?" And he bade them fetch

Some subtle moulder of brazen shapes—
"Can the soul, the will, die out of a man 200
"Ere his body find the grave that gapes?

"John of Douay shall effect my plan,
"Set me on horseback here aloft,
"Alive, as the crafty sculptor can,

"In the very square I have crossed so oft : 205
"That men may admire, when future suns
"Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

"While the mouth and the brow stay brave in
bronze—

"Admire and say, 'When he was alive
" 'How he would take his pleasure once !' 210

THE STATUE AND THE BUST

“And it shall go hard but I contrive
“To listen the while, and laugh in my tomb
“At idleness which aspires to strive.”

So! While these wait the trump of doom,
How do their spirits pass, I wonder,
Nights and days in the narrow room? 215

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder
What a gift life was, ages ago,
Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Only they see not God, I know, 220
Nor all that chivalry of his,
The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss—
Since, the end of life being manifest,
He had burned his way thro' the world to this. 225

I hear you reproach, “But delay was best,
“For their end was a crime.”—Oh, a crime will do
As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

As a virtue golden through and through,
Sufficient to vindicate itself 230
And prove its worth at a moment's view!

Must a game be played for the sake of pelf?
Where a button goes, 't were an epigram
To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

The true has no value beyond the sham :
As well the counter as coin, I submit,
When your table 's a hat, and your prize a dram. 235

Stake your counter as boldly every whit,
Venture as warily, use the same skill,
Do your best, whether winning or losing it, 240

If you choose to play !—is my principle.
Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will !

The counter our lovers staked was lost
As surely as if it were lawful coin :
And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost 245

Is—the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.
You of the virtue (we issue join)
How strive you ? *De te, fabula!* 250

PORPHYRIA'S LOVER

THE rain set early in to-night,
The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
And did its worst to vex the lake :
I listened with heart fit to break.
When glided in Porphyria ; straight
She shut the cold out and the storm,
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate
Blaze up, and all the cottage warm ;
Which done, she rose, and from her form
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
And laid her soiled gloves by, untied
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
And, last, she sat down by my side
And called me. When no voice replied,
She put my arm about her waist,
And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,
Murmuring how she loved me—she
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,
To set its struggling passion free
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
And give herself to me for ever.
But passion sometimes would prevail,
Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

A sudden thought of one so pale
For love of her, and all in vain :
So, she was come through wind and rain.
Be sure I looked up at her eyes
Happy and proud ; at last I knew
Porphyria worshipped me ; surprise
Made my heart swell, and still it grew
While I debated what to do.
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
Perfectly pure and good : I found
A thing to do, and all her hair
In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her. No pain felt she ;
I am quite sure she felt no pain.
As a shut bud that holds a bee,
I warily oped her lids : again
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
And I untightened next the tress
About her neck ; her cheek once more
Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss :
I propped her head up as before,
Only, this time my shoulder bore
Her head, which droops upon it still :
The smiling rosy little head,
So glad it has its utmost will,
That all it scorned at once is fled,
And I, its love, am gained instead !
Porphyria's love : she guessed not how
Her darling one wish would be heard.
And thus we sit together now,
And all night long we have not stirred,
And yet God has not said a word !

“CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME ”

(See Edgar's song in “LEAR ”)

I

My first thought was, he lied in every word,
That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
Askance to watch the working of his lie
On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
Suppression of the glee, that pursed and scored 5
Its edge, at one more victim gained thereby.

II

What else should he be set for, with his staff?
What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare
All travellers who might find him posted there,
And ask the road? I guessed what skull-like laugh 10
Would break, what crutch 'gin write my epitaph
For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

III

If at his counsel I should turn aside
Into that ominous tract which, all agree,
Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly 15
I did turn as he pointed : neither pride
Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,
So much as gladness that some end might be.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

IV

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,
What with my search drawn out thro' years, my
hope 20
Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
With that obstreperous joy success would bring,—
I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

V

As when a sick man very near to death 25
Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end
The tears and takes the farewell of each friend,
And hears one bid the other go, draw breath
Freelier outside, ("since all is o'er," he saith,
"And the blow fallen no grieving can amend;") 30

VI

While some discuss if near the other graves
Be room enough for this, and when a day
Suits best for carrying the corpse away,
With care about the banners, scarves and staves :
And still the man hears all, and only craves 35
He may not shame such tender love and stay.

VII

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ
So many times among "The Band"—to wit,
The knights who to the Dark Tower's search
addressed 40
Their steps—that just to fail as they, seemed best,
And all the doubt was now—should I be fit?

“CHILDE ROLAND”

VIII

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
That hateful cripple, out of his highway
Into the path he pointed. All the day 45
Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim
Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.

IX

For mark ! no sooner was I fairly found
Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two, 50
Than, pausing to throw backward a last view
O'er the safe road, 't was gone ; grey plain all
round :
Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.
I might go on ; nought else remained to do.

X

So, on I went. I think I never saw 55
Such starved ignoble nature ; nothing throve :
For flowers—as well expect a cedar grove !
But cockle, spurge, according to their law
Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,
You 'd think ; a burr had been a treasure-trove. 60

XI

No ! penury, inertness and grimace,
In some strange sort, were the land's portion.
“ See
“ Or shut your eyes,” said Nature peevishly,
“ It nothing skills : I cannot help my case :
“ 'T is the Last Judgment's fire must cure this 65
place,
“ Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free.”

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

XII

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk
Above its mates, the head was chopped ; the
bents
Were jealous else. What made those holes
and rents
In the dock's harsh swarth leaves, bruised as to
baulk
All hope of greenness ? 't is a brute must walk 70
Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents.

XIII

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
In leprosy ; thin dry blades pricked the mud
Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood. 75
One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
Stood stupefied, however he came there :
Thrust out past service from the devil's stud !

XIV

Alive ? he might be dead for aught I know,
With that red gaunt and colloped neck a-strain, 80
And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane ;
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe ;
I never saw a brute I hated so ;
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

XV

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart. 85
As a man calls for wine before he fights,
I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights,
Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
Think first, fight afterwards—the soldier's art :
One taste of the old time sets all to rights. 90

“CHILDE ROLAND”

XVI

Not it ! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
 Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
 Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
That way he used. Alas, one night's disgrace ! 95
 Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

XVII

Giles then, the soul of honour—there he stands
 Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.
 What honest man should dare (he said) he
 durst.
Good—but the scene shifts—faugh ! what hang-
 man hands 100
Pin to his breast a parchment ? His own bands
 Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and curst !

XVIII

Better this present than a past like that ;
 Back therefore to my darkening path again !
 No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain. 105
Will the night send a howlet or a bat ?
I asked : when something on the dismal flat
 Came to arrest my thoughts and change their
 train.

XIX

A sudden little river crossed my path
 As unexpected as a serpent comes. 110
 No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms ;
This, as it frothed by, might have been a bath
For the fiend's glowing hoof—to see the wrath
 Of its black eddy bespate with flakes and
 spumes.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

XX

So petty yet so spiteful ! All along, 115
Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it ;
Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit
Of mute despair, a suicidal throng :
The river which had done them all the wrong,
Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit. 120

XXI

Which, while I forded,—good saints, how I feared
To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to seek
For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard !
—It may have been a water-rat I speared, 125
But, ugh ! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

XXII

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.
Now for a better country. Vain presage !
Who were the strugglers, what war did they
wage,
Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank 130
Soil to a splash ? Toads in a poisoned tank,
Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage—

XXIII

The fight must so have seemed in that fell cirque.
What penned them there, with all the plain to
choose ?
No foot-print leading to that horrid mews, 135
None out of it. Mad brewage set to work
Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves the Turk
Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.

“CHILDE ROLAND”

XXIV

And more than that—a furlong on—why, there !
What bad use was that engine for, that wheel, 140
Or brake, not wheel—that harrow fit to reel
Men’s bodies out like silk ? with all the air
Of Tophet’s tool, on earth left unaware,
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

XXV

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood, 145
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere
earth
Desperate and done with ; (so a fool finds mirth,
Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood
Changes and off he goes !) within a rood—
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black
dearth. 150

XXVI

Now blotches rankling, coloured gay and grim,
Now patches where some leanness of the soil ’s
Broke into moss or substances like boils ;
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim 155
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

XXVII

And just as far as ever from the end !
Nought in the distance but the evening, nought
To point my footstep further ! At the thought,
A great black bird, Apollyon’s bosom-friend, 160
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned
That brushed my cap—perchance the guide I
sought.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

XXVIII

For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,
'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place
Allround to mountains—with such nametograce 165
Mere ugly heights and heaps now stolen in view.
How thus they had surprised me,—solve it, you !
How to get from them was no clearer case.

XXIX

Yet half I seemed to recognize some trick
Of mischief happened to me, God knows when— 170
In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended, then,
Progress this way. When, in the very nick
Of giving up, one time more, came a click
As when a trap shuts—you 're inside the den !

XXX

Burningly it came on me all at once, 175
This was the place ! those two hills on the right,
Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in
fight ;
While to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . .
Dunce,
Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,
After a life spent training for the sight ! 180

XXXI

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself ?
The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,
Built of brown stone, without a counterpart
In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf 185
Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf
He strikes on, only when the timbers start.

“CHILDE ROLAND”

XXXII

Not see? because of night perhaps?—why, day
Came back again for that! before it left,
The dying sunset kindled through a cleft:
The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay, 190
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay,—
“Now stab and end the creature—to the heft!

XXXIII

Not hear? when noise was everywhere! it tolled
Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears
Of all the lost adventurers my peers,— 195
How such a one was strong, and such was bold,
And such was fortunate, yet each of old
Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe of years.

XXXIV

There they stood, ranged along the hill-sides, met
To view the last of me, a living frame 200
For one more picture! in a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
And blew “*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower
came.*”

ADDITIONAL POEMS

ADDITIONAL POEMS

SONNET

EYES calm beside thee (Lady, could'st thou know!)
May turn away thick with fast-gathering tears :
I glance not where all gaze : thrilling and low
Their passionate praises reach thee—my cheek
wears

Alone no wonder when thou passest by ;
Thy tremulous lids bent and suffused reply
To the irrepressible homage which doth glow
On every lip but mine : if in thine ears
Their accents linger—and thou dost recall
Me as I stood, still, guarded, very pale,
Beside each votarist whose lighted brow
Wore worship like an aureole, "O'er them all
"My beauty," thou wilt murmur, "did prevail
"Save that one only":—Lady, could'st thou know!

A FOREST THOUGHT¹

IN far Esthonian solitudes
The parent-firs of future woods
Gracefully, airily spire at first
Up to the sky, by the soft sand nurst ;
Self-sufficient are they, and strong
With outspread arms, broad level and long ;
But soon in the sunshine and the storm
They darken, changing fast their form—
Low boughs fall off, and in the bole
Each tree spends all its strenuous soul—
Till the builder gazes wistfully
Such noble ship-mast wood to see,
And cares not for its soberer hue,
Its rougher bark and leaves more few.

But just when beauty passes away
And you half regret it could not stay,
For all their sap and vigorous life,—
Under the shade, secured from strife
A seedling springs—the forest-tree
In miniature, and again we see
The delicate leaves that will fade one day,
The fan-like shoots that will drop away,
The taper stem a breath could strain—
Which shall foil one day the hurricane :
We turn from this infant of the copse
To the parent-firs,—in their waving tops
To find some trace of the light green tuft
A breath could stir,—in the bole aloft

¹ "Written and inscribed to W. A. and A. D. by their Sincere Friend,
Robert Browning, 13 Nelson Sq., November 4, 1837."

A FOREST THOUGHT

Column-like set against the sky,
The spire that flourished airily
And the marten bent as she rustled by.
So shall it be, dear Friends, when days
Pass, and in this fair child we trace
Goodness, full-formed in you, tho' dim
Faint-budding, just astir in him :
When rudiments of generous worth
And frankest love in him have birth,
We 'll turn to love and worth full-grown,
And learn their fortune from your own.
Nor shall we vainly search to see
His gentleness—simplicity—
Not lost in your maturer grace—
Perfected, but not changing place.

May this grove be a charmed retreat . . .
May northern winds and savage sleet
Leave the good trees untouched, unshorn
A crowning pride of woods unborn :
And gracefully beneath their shield
May the seedling grow ! All pleasures yield
Peace below and peace above,
The glancing squirrels' summer love,
And the brood-song of the cushat-dove !

BEN KARSHOOK'S WISDOM

I

"WOULD a man 'scape the rod?"

Rabbi Ben Karshook saith,

"See that he turn to God

"The day before his death."

"Ay, could a man inquire

"When it shall come!" I say.

The Rabbi's eye shoots fire—

"Then let him turn to-day!"

II

Quoth a young Sadducee :

"Reader of many rolls,

"Is it so certain we

"Have, as they tell us, souls?"

"Son, there is no reply!"

The Rabbi bit his beard ;

"Certain, a soul have I—

"*We* may have none," he sneer'd.

Thus Karshook, the Hiram's-Hammer,
The Right-hand Temple-column,
Taught babes in grace their grammar,
And struck the simple, solemn.

ROME, *April* 27, 1854.

